

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Hey everybody, welcome to Shaped by Dog. I am Susan Garrett and today we're going to talk about one of my favorite topics. That is the power of permission. This is the reason I have success. Training dogs in environment without intimidation or physical punishment. This is huge. And it's going to be, I'm sure the first of many, many podcasts on this topic.

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I'm going to give you an example, a scenario. So, let's say you have a 15-year-old boy and he's your son. And he says, uh, Hey, one of my rich friend's father is giving him a Lamborghini for his birthday. So, he's having a party on Friday night. I'm invited, we're all going to get a chance to drive this Lambo during the night around a racetrack, after we take some shots and do some cocaine, and it's not going to cost anything because his dad's covering the cost of everything.

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Yeah, so is it okay if I go? Now that's a no brainer, right? That's an obvious no. No, I really don't think that's a good idea. It's like you're walking your dog down the street and it's a really busy street, so you're a little bit nervous cause it's a lot of traffic on the street. All of a sudden you see a cat dart in front of your path out into the traffic. Now this, you know, cats have nine lives. This cat is able to weave his way through this busy street, get to the other side, but your dog lunges on the leash and goes, oh my gosh, I need to chase that cat. Do you take off the leash and say, we'll have at it because I think you could be lucky too.

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No, no. In both cases, the permission to go could lead to something, an outcome you don't want, even though to the dog and to maybe your 15 year old kid, it looks like, you know, things could be fun if you were given that permission. So, permission creates an expectation. The opposite of permission is entitlement. Entitlement is, I just, I want this, I get it. There's a lot of times that the things your dog's asking for seems benign, right?

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Like you're watching TV, the dog comes up and kind of smacks at your hand like, Hey, I'd like you to scratch my ears. Yeah, whatever. Yeah, I'm sitting here. I can do that. I can scratch your hand, your ears. Yeah, that's good we're bonding, right? Or the dog, you're eating your dinner, watching TV and the dog comes up and stares at your plate and says, yeah, just a little, can I just have it a little bit? Yeah. Okay. I'll just, just once you can have a little snippet of that. How's that hurt anything.

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What you don't understand is that sometimes is anytime to a dog. You can't negotiate like possibly you could to a kid. Even then it's not going to work well, even if you say, well, this is one time you can have dessert before dinner, but don't ask me again. Yeah. Like that's going to ever happen. They're going to ask you again. It's different if they're at grandma's and grandma let some have it because it's a different environment with a different trainer. Okay. Cue the dramatic music, letting you know that somebody in



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your household could have different rules than you, as long as you are consistent with the application of the rules that you have for that dog.

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So, when they demand things from you like scratch my ears, share your food, or they whine and stare at a tennis ball. Oh yeah. Did you want to go play catch outside? Okay. Let's go play, catch. These all seem kind of benign, but they're creating not great things for two reasons. Number one, you're setting up the expectation that you're going to do whatever your dog wants whenever the dog wants.

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And when that bond is broke, like say they, they start waking up at five o'clock in the morning it's time for you to feed me. And you'll say, Susan, I'll just get up and I'll feed them and then I'll go right back to bed it's not a big deal to me. But there's going to be a time when the dog comes up and starts saying, it's time to scratch my ears and you're really busy getting in a report for work, you're at your computer and you're going to just lose it a little bit. "Go lay down, leave me alone." Now you've set up a relationship that's inconsistent and maybe your dog might keep being persistent in saying no really, it's time to scratch my ears.

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And what's going to happen is your going to feel frustrated and angry because you're trying to get something done. Same as it your mother-in-law's now eating dinner off their lap and the dog comes up and starts drooling in front of them or your boss, "go lie down." Some time is anytime. "Hey pal, it's time."

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The dog is now going to get frustrated and disappointed. Because they're not getting what they want. It doesn't have to be that way. And you could create an amazing relationship and get amazing working relationship with your dog if you switch things around and you build in the power of permission into everything you do with your dog.

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For me, it starts with a simple game. I call [ItsYerChoice](#), right? So, one word, ItsYerChoice. I put a really high value cookie in my hand. The dog might be jumping at me and saying, oh my God, I want that, I want that one, I want it. You wait until they stop jumping. You open your hand. If they don't jump up, you give them the cookie.

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So, they've earned the right to the cookie by doing something. And that grows to [Crate Games](#) where the dog learns, when I put my hand on the crate door, you sit at the back and I give you the permission using the word 'break' that you can do something. People take things like - you see it all the time on Facebook - "oh, look at my puppy. He loves to swim." Well, I assume my dogs are going to learn to swim, but people give the puppies the opportunity to learn how much swimming is fun and they think it's cute.

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But then when the dog gets to be a two-year-old dog, and they're trying to do agility beside a swimming hole and the dog either doesn't do agility, just runs to the swimming hole or the dog crosses the finish line and beelines it because they have no control because they never built in that control with



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permissions. We have a big pond on our property here. And when I take my dogs for a walk, they always end up hanging out of the pond. And they're saying like, "mother may I", most of the time, I just keep walking and they're like, "oh, I guess it's not now".

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Sometimes when it's a hot day, I'll say, go for a swim. And that is like Nirvana. Like, "thank you, you've given me the permission to the most awesome thing". But I often build in behaviors. So, everyone come on over here. So just staring at the pond isn't going to give you the right to go for a swim. Everybody sit in a control position.

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Everyone's sitting. Alright, go for a swim. Somebody chooses not to sit. You're saying, I don't really feel like swimming right now. You can hear Swagger in the back because I keep saying the word swim. My dogs do love that. So, when you set up a relationship where your dog is in control, it can at some point create frustration for you because, and the flip is true as well because the dog has this relationship of entitlement.

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I get what I want, when I want. When I want to be fed, I bark at you, it doesn't matter that you're asleep, it's 5:00 AM. I might start whining or pawing, or I might just head right in with the bark. It's a relationship of entitlement does though create frustration and anger when the expected outcomes aren't met.

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When we see it in kids, we see it in dogs. So, a better way to be is to create these relationships of permission, which creates clear expectation and equitable relationship for both the dog and the owner and creates an equitable relationship between a child and the parent. For example, I remember one time, I was probably about 14, saying to my mum on a Friday night, a bunch of my friends, we were going to go hang out at the mall after dinner.

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Is that okay? My mother looked at me with this strange look. And instead of just saying flatly no, which would have been controlling, she said to me, that's a little out of character for you. That's not something you would normally choose to do what's up and it wasn't. And she caught me. Yeah, yeah well, my friends just said that might be something cool to do.

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Is that something you really want to do? Not really. Well, what if you suggested something else to your friends, something new. So, we tried roller skating and then we just ended up starting roller skating on a Friday night actually. Now, another time on a Friday, and now keep in mind that I had chores that I had to do over the weekend.

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Not many didn't take long, but I did have chores. Another Friday night coming home saying, hey mom, a bunch of my friends were going to go play hockey for a few hours after dinner. That's okay? And she said to me, is your homework done? Or, and are your chores done? The answer was no to both, but she didn't then be controlling and say, well, you get your homework done.



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She said, which one is going to take you the longest to do? And I said, all the chores, of course. And she said, well, how about you get your homework done between now and when you want to go out and then you get the chores done after. Okay. But what happens is the permission she gives me to do what I want to do, builds that relationship deepens the relationship that we have.

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And also, the 20 minutes that it took me to do the homework. It was such a relief knowing it was done for the weekend. As opposed to what I often did is procrastinated that homework and I had to do it on a Sunday night under pressure. And when I was tired, and I really didn't want to do it. So, it was so reinforcing to go out and play hockey knowing that homework was done was awesome. And then I'd have a great, you know, evening playing hockey and I'd come in and I'd start my chores. Right.

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So, permissions are powerful. You build those permissions into everything you do. It could be something simple, like asking the dog to sit. You're going to the park. The dog loves to go to the park and they're straining at their leash and you go, well, they want to get off and chase the squirrels or whatever. And you go, well, it's hurting my shoulder that they're straining. So, I'm just going to release it. It's going to, you know, it's, win-win, I'm happy because my shoulders aren't being pulled anymore and the dog's happy.

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Permissions all bring massive value of reinforcement that you're just giving away. That the dog says, I want to chase the squirrels and you say, have at it, you're giving it away. If the dog walks on a loose leash, then I ask them to sit, they sit, then I'll give them a permission. I still don't like dogs chasing squirrels.

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I think that's unfair to the squirrels, but that's just me. My dogs understand that the things that they want in life, they come through me. So, the things they value the most, like going for a walk, going for a ride, going swimming, playing agility, that all comes with the criteria of doing things the way I'd like you to see you do them before.

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So, something like a behavior chain. It's a great example of how permissions work. So, something like my dog loves retrieve. I asked the dog to sit, the dog sits, I take the toy and I throw it. The dog is still holding the sit and the, their behavior of still holding the sit creates the permission of me telling them to get the toy.

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Then bringing the toy right back to me, creates the permission of maybe us playing tug or me asking for an out, them giving me the out, creates the permission of me asking for another sit and then throwing the toy for another retrieve. Everything that they do, as I ask, creates the permission for me to do the next step of the chain, which is what they want. Throw the toy, right?

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I remember I had a student and they, they, this was what a behavior chain that they had created with their dog. They said my dog is not a big fan of eating, my little Jack Russell, because he'll only take a few mouthfuls and then walk away. And when he wants to play, he bounces off the counter and barks at the ball, and then we go out him and then we play.

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And then he does, when he's done, he just, he just comes back and stares at the house. And then when he wants more of his food, he just barks at the food bowl on his counter. And then we put it down. He only takes a mouthful or two. He doesn't, he doesn't don't have a big stomach. And then he walks away. So, the dog is telling you what he wants when he wants. And none of it is instigating through you. Right. So that is a relationship of entitlement. Which none of the value in life actually goes through you. Creating a relationship based on permission is creating clear expectation, creates a relationship of great equity. And you may say, well, I don't know how to undo some of the things that I've already done.

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It starts with just a small game. And that's why I love games to train because it's a win-win. It's like you're giving your dog a choice between two easy things like asking me, Susan, would you like green peas or chocolate? The outcome for me is clear. I want chocolate. Yeah. It's an easy decision. When you train through games and you ask a simple question, like ItsYerChoice does, you get what you want as a trainer and the dog gets what they want as a dog. It creates an equitable relationship based on trust with clear expectations and clear outcomes. And that cooperation is what helps build relationships, because if you are in a relationship where somebody is trying to control you, that is frustrating.

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When you're in a relationship where you're the one trying to control, eventually you create an oppositional relationship, which you have been trying to control, and that opposition frustrates and angers you. So, a relationship based on permission creates amazing outcomes.

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And that's what I hope for you and your dog, a relationship based on equity, clear outcomes and it can happen when you start easy with games like ItsYerChoice, leading to Crate Games, leading to dogs who sit to ask to go outside, leading to dogs who walk on a loose leash which allows them access to run, which leads to a dog coming when they're called, which leads to access to them maybe getting to go for a swim you, see how it works.

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That's the power of permission. It all starts with a game. That's it for today. I will see you next time on Shaped By Dog. And if you haven't, please subscribe and tell your friends about this podcast in particular. I'll see you next time.

Resources

[Blog Post: Why "Choice" is the Critical Key to a Great Dog \(ItsYerChoice\)](#)

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Blog Post: Retrieve Games](#)



About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



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