



## Episode: #20

# Bridging the Gap Between Blame and Kindness in Dog Training

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Hey everybody, welcome to Shaped by Dog. I am Susan Garrett. And if you are listening to this podcast, or if you're on YouTube watching this podcast, chances are you at least have a curiosity and interest in how to train your dog effectively without the use of physical punishment and blame, you're at least curious. And for many of you, it's a goal that you strive to reach every single day. How can I effectively communicate with my dog? How can I achieve lofty goals with my dog? Or how can I have the best family pet ever without using physical corrections, or intimidation, or verbal corrections? How do I get that? If that's you, then chances are, you've already met up with what we call the gap.

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And the gap is let's say over here is the destination where we're heading. This is what we like to refer to as "Do-Land". And this is where we recognize that dogs are doing the best they can, with the education we've given them in the environment that we're asking them to work in. That's our guiding thought. That we want to train our dog using reinforcement using games, using their own drives and figuring out what they love best.

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In Do-Land, babies never cry, and birds always sing and there's rainbows and unicorns, and it's not a fictional place really. But sometimes it seems like that. Because if you've come from a world where, like I, I was trained in what today would refer to as balance training, where I was taught to get the dog to do what you want. I mean, this was back in the late eighties. You teach the dog with cookies on the nose to lure them, to get behaviors you want. And then you reach this magical moment where you've arbitrarily decided he knows better. And therefore, when he doesn't do what you've asked him to do, you need to follow it up with a physical correction.

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This is the land of blame and judgment. This is the land where dogs hear things like "ah-ah, or no, or Hey!" This is the land where there's tools that we use to punish behavior because the dog fell short of what we expected of them. This is where every day we're judging what our dog does to decide if it meets up to what we want.

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We may label dogs as being stubborn or defiant or on their own agenda or blowing us off, or it's like, he goes deaf. That's the world that we've left or we want to leave and we're going to this place that Susan describes as an amazing place where you can train your dog using fun and games and reinforcement and all the things they like, just by making sure you're manipulating environment.

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But then we meet up with this gap. And here's how it happens. Our dog is digging in the garden, or our dog has got their paws on the counter stealing tonight's dinner. Or our dog has jumped in the pond when he wasn't supposed to. Or a dog is chasing a cat and you're paralyzed because the old lessons would say, that dog is a little turd and you need to, you know, take them in hand and "Hey! you need to stop and you need - BAM!"



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“And you're going to be punished for that inappropriate behavior”. You see my dogs they don't understand, if you're watching this on YouTube, you get, this excites my dogs. When I say things like “no, and Hey! and not”, they don't understand it because they don't hear it. So, what do you do? And this is where I've seen students freeze. I don't know what to do. I'll give you an example. Our very own Lynda Orton-Hill. Which she started with a student here with us. And this is probably going back more than 15, 20 years ago. I was exercising my dogs in the pond and at the time I had two little Jack Russells. One was older and they were swimming.

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And, uh, I had thrown a toy for one of my dogs to retrieve. Well her golden retriever, field-bred dog loves the water and love toys. Lynda came out and her dog saw my dog going after a toy and she just jumped in the pond practically on top of my little Jack Russell and grab the toy of her mouth. And it's like, yeah, this is a good day.

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And Lynda stood there, paralyzed. She didn't know what to do. What do you do when you know the world you've left behind would have told you to correct that dog and tell them they're bad? And the world you want to be a part of is about training with reinforcement. And so, Lynda just froze. She didn't know what to do. And that's when I recognized there's a gap for our students. But here is an important guideline when you're training this way.

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Positive is not permissive. Just because we're training with positive reinforcement doesn't mean that we're permissive and we have no guidelines or expectations for our dogs. You'll see a lot of people training their dogs and they're trying to be positive only, but they don't have this clarity of what is expected of their dog and their dogs run amock.

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And people who come from this old world who are experts of authority in the world of blame and judgment says, look at that, that proves that using cookies isn't going to work when push comes to shove. The dog is going to do what they want to do. Oh nay-nay. Oh nay-nay says the experts who have had a great deal of success with that. I'm going to share with you, what do you do to bridge that gap when you know, you want to leave this world behind, but you don't know how to deal those one offs.

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What do I do when I catch my dog doing something I don't want him to do? There are expectations. But I believe we need to earn the right to have expectations. We have goals that we would like our dogs to be able to achieve at this level. But those expectations have to be earned by you, by educating your dog to make the right choices.

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All of my podcast episodes up until this point, reinforce that it is through the control of what reinforces the dog and the manipulation of the environment the dog is working in or allowed to roam in, those are the two keys that will bring you success. And every layer of success means you can raise those expectations a little bit higher.



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When I get a new puppy, let's say I adopted a, an older dog, like Tater Salad. I'm not going to walk in, out in the field where there's chipmunks and rabbits and squirrels and have an expectation that he's going to listen. Hey, Hey. Hey, tow the line. No, heck no. There hasn't been the transfer of value to me.

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And you could say, my dog's a field bred Vizsla Susan, I'm sorry. He's got more value for birds than he does for food. He, it's not going to work with him. Yes, it will. Because we take what your dog loves most of all and we transfer that value into you and working with you. And it is a process. So, let's get back to the gap. What happens when you're in that gap? And this has been brought up recently in my Recallers student area. And somebody said, "well, I think my dog goes deaf. He listens to me inside the house, but when he gets outside, he goes deaf, he doesn't listen to me".

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Earn the right to have the expectations that your dog will listen to you outside by educating the dog. Because if you believe our dogs are always doing the best they can, with the education we've given them in the environment that we're asking them to perform, when they aren't doing what we think is their best, you got to look up one or two things. The education you've given them or the environment that you've put them in.

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So what do you do when you find yourself in the gap? Envision a scenario, maybe something has happened to you as recently as today that you've caught your dog doing something. You're in that paralyzed phase that Lynda Orton-Hill found herself, "I didn't know what to do. It was Susan Garrett's dog and my dog just jumped and took the toy. What would I do?"

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So, there's two things when you find yourself in that position. Number one, you need to stop the reinforcement that the dog is getting at that moment. Stop the reinforcement. So, I saw somebody who was trying to transition from this world to that world. I was at an obedience class and her Border Collie was very vocal and got very excited watching the other dogs. And he was barking at the other dogs. And she felt the way she would address it in the new world, she would just turn her back on the dog. I'm not going to give him my attention. And that might be important if what the dog was valuing at this moment, watching the dogs had less value than your attention, but it didn't.

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The dog is getting all this reinforcement by barking at these dogs that are moving. So, you turning your back is absolutely ineffective at best, and actually allowing the dog to earn reinforcement by watching, which is going to make that problem more difficult. So, if your dog is stealing food from the counter, you don't just turn your back and go, not going to give him my attention because, um, that's what I do in this world.

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Heck no, we need to number one, stop the reinforcement the dog is getting. The next mistake that people would make is they call the dog. And if you go back to episode 2 or episode 11, or even just my last episode where I talked about how much power cues have to our dogs. Because recalling the dog, the dog's name is associated with so much reinforcement.



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That when you call them, you are actually saying, “what you're doing right now is super good and I love it”. So, if I saw my dog with their feet on the table and they were grabbing for the roast and I called them, I would be saying, “that's good. Try that again later, but not right now. I'd like you to get your feet off the table”. Because of the value their name has. So, what would I do? Number one, stop the reinforcement. So, I would just go up to the dog and I would take their feet off of the counter. That's number one.

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The dog who dove in the pond after the dog's toy. Here's what I would do. You might not want to do that, but this is what I would do. I jump in the pond after the dog. I have done it twice in my lifetime. And let me preface this with, I'm not afraid of water, but to say I dislike the water is putting it mildly. I am a girl who likes to skate on water and that's about all I like to do with water. I am not a fan of going in swimming. But twice I've done it. Once for my dog Buzzy and once for my dog Decaf.

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Now, Buzzy and Decaf were born in the nineties. Why haven't I had to do it with dogs past that? Because I recognized that my dogs made poor choices because of the education I've given them. The dog, since Buzzy and Decaf have had much better education around water, so they don't make poor choices. So, I said, there's two things you need to do when you're caught in the gap.

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Number one, stop the reinforcement that the dog is getting by what they're doing. Number two, recognize your role in what is going on. All right. Now, my mentor, Bob Bailey and his late wife Marian Bailey, they would say ‘bang head here’. That means you need to feel the pain of the mistake your dog made.

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It's not the dog's mistake. It's an expression of the training that you've given that dog to this point. And so, they would jokingly say ‘bang head here’, because if you got a clunk to your head, it might be more memorable to you that your dog just did something inappropriate because they are a reflection of the education you've given them in the environment that you've asked them to perform.

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So, would your dog put their feet on the table if there was no food up there? Probably not. That's an environment they can perform in. And there's layers to even get to that stage. Some dogs might daily put their feet up on the counter just to scout it out. “Is there anything good for me here today? Hmm, not then I'll come back later tomorrow”.

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You need to build value for not putting the feet up on the counter. And so, there are many, many layers. For my young dogs, I don't give them the opportunity to learn how much fun swimming is until I have built in a very strong recall for me. So, the first thing I do around water is to build the recall out of the water. And eventually I let them have the opportunity to swim. The mistake I used to make, and that I see many, many people make is they're so excited about getting their puppies, loving water, and they just let them swim and swim and swim and swim. And then they have a problem on their hand. I like to do it the opposite way.



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I like to build the value for me and then I get the transfer of value. You get the chance to go in the water and then you recall out for me. Okay. So positive is not permissive, remember that. Just because you are training in a world where we get the results we want, all by being kind in our interactions with our dogs, we still get. But for me, I have the expectations of any world-class agility competitor. I want, and I aim towards building excellence in my dog's behaviors.

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Now 99% of the people listening to this, that's not your goals. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't take advantage of the structure that I have worked through to figure out how to get brilliance. It all starts for me. How I get that excellence in an amazing agility dog is by creating the most amazing family pet ever. And from that foundation, I can grow to whatever it is that I want to do.

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And so, I have goals, but those goals aren't expectations until I've put in the work and the layers of learning to create the education and all the different environments that I want the dog to perform in, and that gives me the right to have expectations. And I tell you what, rarely do my dogs disappoint, when my expectations are there and the expectations have been earned by creating value in all different environments, for the choice that I'm looking for my dogs to make.

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It's not just something that is possible for world-class trainers. It is possible for any level of pet owner. Because I have so many people that go through our online programs, like homeschool the dog, and our Recallers program, who have never owned a dog before. And lucky you guys, those are the people who start training their first dog in Do-Land. They do not have to unlearn all of the things that many of us had to unlearn when we made that transition from the world of blame to the world of do.

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That's it for this episode of Shaped by Dog. Please if you're enjoying this, let me know how you feel. Leave me a review. I'd love to hear from you. And I will see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

- [Blog: Where the Heck is Do-Land, Anyway?](#)
- [Vlog: Loose Potatoes \(Sometimes Dog Training Needs a Plan B\)](#)
- [Podcast Episode 6: The Art of Manipulation](#)
- [Podcast Episode 11: The Power of Permission in Dog Training](#)
- [Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)
- [Podcast Episode 19: One of My Biggest Pet Peeves in Dog Training](#)
- [Vlog: Talking About Ruff Love \(Tater and Chipmunks\)](#)
- [Vlog: Learning from Cats and Seagulls ... Chat with Bob Bailey](#)



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### 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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