

# What Is Your Identity as a Dog Owner?

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Hey, everybody. Welcome to Shaped By Dog. I am Susan Garrett and it is tonight. By that I mean it is past nine o'clock at night, technically past my bedtime. Normally I do these podcasts in the morning, so this is different. We're going to see how Susan podcasts when she podcasts at night, because for the last six days, things have been a little weird around here in that we have a litter of puppies.

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Yes. My youngest Momentum who is five years old ... I keep getting asked that question ... she had a litter of four puppies and oh my gosh they're so cute. One of these puppies is my next puppy that I'm going to be taking. And if you've watched episode 13 here on Shaped By Dog, you know that I already know the name of that puppy.

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It's just for me to decide which one of these four puppies is that puppy. And to tell you the truth, I believe I knew the night they were born. And so, we will see if I'm right. Not going to tell you which one, because I don't want you to influence anything, but I'm pretty sure I know which one of these puppies I'm going to keep.

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And so, the process begins. I'm going to be doing some interesting things with this litter of puppies. Of course, I'll be sharing it here on the podcast and on my blog, stay tuned, a lot of cool things up and coming. But it made me realize like, how I identify myself. Like when you think of Susan Garrett, or you go to listen to Susan Garrett's podcast, you have an identity of me.

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Now it may be Susan Garrett, the world champion, agility competitor. It may be Susan Garrett as the educator of dog trainers or educator of dog owners. It maybe she's my coach in my online classes, like you all have a different idea of me. What's important is how you think of yourself as a dog owner. So, it's not important how you think of me. What is important is how I think of me, super critical, because it will hurt or help your growth as a dog trainer. Now you're going to say Susan, I'm just a dog owner.

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Guess what? If you own a dog, then the dog is getting trained. Now the dog is getting trained either with your conscious effort or through the experimentation of the dog, either way you're a dog trainer. One of them, you're not such a great dog trainer. The other one you could be at consciously becoming a great dog trainer just by putting one foot in front of the other.

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And after today's episode, I'm going to share with you how you can and make that intentional just by the way you think about how do you identify as this dog person, let's say. So, people will say, "Oh, Susan, I'm just a newbie". Yeah, so, I just, I identify as a newbie. Yeah. So, here's what I've observed is, when people are say they're brand new and you know what? We all start somewhere.



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If you create the identity that, Oh, I'm a novice, I'm a newbie, I'm a duffer, Oh I'm... this is, it's all new to me. What happens is when do you transition from that? And for many people, if you keep repeating this, it sticks with you for a long time. So, what is a healthier identity for you if you are new on this dog training journey? I'm not going to give you one, maybe at the end I'll suggest maybe you might take mine because you and I can have the same identity as dog owners believe it or not. True story.

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I'll going to leave that with you for a second. How do you identify as a person who owns a dog? Like what do you call yourself? And I've already given you the spoiler alert. I don't think it's healthy to say, I'm novice, I'm newbie, I'm whatever. I also don't think it's healthy to say... I mean, it's true that I've won many gold medals at world championship events in the sport of dog training and multiple different sports in dog agility, in flyball and obedience. I've accomplished at the elite level world titles in all of those sports. But I don't identify myself as I am the best dog trainer in the world.

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Because this is just so important. If you're listening to this and you are a so-called expert, that could hurt you. Because let's say you get in a room with some really accomplished dog trainers. It could turn into a place where you have to re-establish that identity for your own mind, by saying some brilliant stuff around these really expert dog trainers. Where the truth is, this is an opportunity for you to learn from these expert dog trainers. The accolades or the accomplishments that I have, I've had in the past, those are events that happen to me, and then I moved on from them, but they don't change my identity.

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Let's say my identity is, I'm the world champion. I am a world champion of dog agility. It's true. I have won world championship events, but that is an event that is not an identity, because if it is an identity, let's say one dog comes along and it's not going to put you on the podium every time, or maybe not at all. It's easy for you to then lose interest in the sport or get very, very frustrated.

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And that's a shame because you know what I love the sport. I started competing in the sport of dog agility when I was in my mid thirties, only because it wasn't around before then. It hadn't come to North America. So, I love the sport and I never want to lose that love for the sport. I'm not going to have my identity as a dog owner, be wrapped up in my accomplishments in a sport, or I'm going to lose my love for the sport. I've had people who've been in the sport for three or four years telling me I've won a lot, so I've lost interest. If you've lost interest, then there's something wrong with the way you were looking at things to begin with.

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I personally identify myself as somebody who is curious. I am a curious expert. I am a humble, curious expert. By staying humble, I recognize I can learn from every single person I meet. I am curious, and I have a passion for learning. Those are my identities as a dog owner. But I... there's another element to these things that make a big difference. And that is, I am an action taker.

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I see so many people, especially with there's so much opportunity to learn right now in this world. Podcasts, there's so many great podcasts. You're listening to one that's pretty darn good, right?



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Blog posts, online classes. There's so many different opportunities. People are out there trying to gather. They're information gatherers because they don't want to miss out on something that potentially could be, you know, life altering.

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They gather all this information, or they gather, and then they opinion shop. They're accumulating. You're saying I just got to get it all right in my head before I get my dog out and I'm going to put this into action and give it a try. This is not a good approach on so many levels. You need to take a little in, assimilated in your brain, maybe rehearse it on a piece of paper. Just think, make sure you got the actions right. Push away from the computer and go and play with your dog. Too many people are information gatherers at the expense of their dog. They gather, they might try something very small, but then they go in opinion shop, they go to two or three different experts and ask them the same darn question.

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And then they go back and gather more information. Because they believe that they need to know more and get things perfected before they can go and take action with their dog. You know what training a dog is a great opportunity to learn through experience. I'm not saying just go off and try things. You absolutely need direction from somebody who has had results, not only with their own dogs, but with students and even ideally students with the same type of dog training challenge that you're faced right now.

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So, you gather information and immediately take action. And then you evaluate your mistakes. That's what I'm looking forward to with this new puppy. What am I going to learn for my new mistakes? Because boy, oh boy, I know I'm going to make them. And I know with every mistake there's going to be some new lessons. I'm super excited by that. I'm super excited to change some of the things I do with momentum when I trained her. And I'm super excited to see what new things this puppy is going to teach me that I can learn from. You've got to be open for that learning.

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Gather information, and then take action, and then evaluate on the outcome of what you did. Why don't people identify as action takers. I think a lot of it has to come back to the risk that they're taking. If you gather information, you take yet another online course and another one, and you get another opinion from another so-called expert. What you're doing is you're putting more time between you owning the dog and you taking action and potentially failing.

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Perfectionism is just another form of procrastination. Perfectionism, gathering more and more information is just another way to procrastinate. And procrastinate is a form of self protection. You get protected by what may happen if you fail in front of somebody. It may be that you don't want to disappoint your dog. Well, guess what? They don't care. It just means if you're training in a game-based system with a lots of reinforcement, they got a few too many cookies. Big deal. They're like... they're going to say, "Oh yeah. You probably shouldn't have done that." Oh, heck no. "Yeah, you gave me a few extra cookies because you rewarded the wrong thing." "Yeah, let's try it again. Cause I'm game. Cause this has been fun."



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Identify yourself in a way that creates momentum for you to move forward with your dog. Don't be afraid to get it wrong. I'm going to tell you right now you're going to get a heck of a lot wrong. But you're going to have a lot of fun when you do it if you train in a way that creates confidence in your dog, and confidence in you.

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Now it's not a linear path guys. It's not like going point A to point B is a straight line. There is a lot of ups and downs, but when you follow a really good program or an established coach, an established expert, who's had experience. Instead of going all the way up across, you know, in the wrong direction and then going, Oh, course correction, this is way off path and then going all the way down in the opposite direction and going, Oh crap course correction I'm on the wrong path, and going back all the way up, you know, this variance is huge when you don't have good direction and good coaching.

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When you're following a good program, that variance gets really small. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, guess what you get further along down that path, very, very fast. A lot more efficient. Do you not make mistakes? No, you still make mistakes. You just are able to identify them very quickly, course-correct, move on.

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That's why you want to be following a good program, but that's also why you want to take action. Gather information, assimilated in your head. Maybe go through the actions that you're going to take on paper, push away from the computer, set up a video camera so you can video your training. Try something. I don't care if it's... it's your choice or, one of the puppy games that I taught in episode number 18, there's some simple games here in this podcast.

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Try something. And then at the end, if it didn't work out, ask yourself, what's my identity. I hope you don't say, oh my identities, I'm a loser, I can't do anything, I can't train this dog. My identity is that I'm humble, I'm curious, and I'm a lifelong learner who's an action taker. That's what's going to get you to the next step.

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But so often what happens is we create these stories in our head. Okay, well, I'll do that tomorrow. And you start negotiating with yourself. You know, you've had a lot going on today. You got a litter of puppies in your house. You shouldn't have to do this podcast Susan, do it tomorrow. No, non-negotiable Susan.

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I have a list of things that I'm going to do, and they're going to get done. For you and I, it means our dogs are going to be engaged with every day. And engagement doesn't need to take an hour. It can take two to three minutes, do something today that is going to take you one step closer to having a well-trained dog. And that could be binge watch some of these episodes on YouTube or binge listen to all of the podcasts from iTunes or wherever you're listening to them, or go back, read each of my six hundred blog posts that are out there. I think there's at least 600, there might be more, I don't know. Go back and read or relisten to these podcasts.



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And if there's something you don't understand, leave me a comment because guess what? I got a great comment. Oh, I'm going to forget who gave it to me. A hound... hound... I can't remember, but you know what? My great editors are going to make me look like a star because they're going to put the name of the person who left this great comment. Gave me a great idea for a podcast. I'm going to do it next week. All on criteria.

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Listen to my podcasts. If there's something you don't understand, leave me a question. That question could be a suggestion for an upcoming episode or could just honestly be a question that I could answer right here on an upcoming episode of Shaped by Dog.

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Be an action taker. Intentionally create the identity you want to have as a dog owner. And make it an identity that moves you and your dog forward to a better place tomorrow than you were yesterday. It's easy. One small step at a time. It's like they say, you know that old line about how do you eat an elephant? And of course, being vegan it would be, how do you eat a tofu elephant? Well, something that big, you can't eat it all in one bite. You've got to take small bites.

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So how do you eat a tofu elephant? One bite at a time and you keep up with consistent effort every single day. Listen to the podcasts. Take action. Read a blog post, take action. Get out, push away from the computer. Train your dog before you know it, you're going to go, "Wow. This new identity has led me to a much better place".

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That's it for me here on Shaped By Dog. Please, if you are enjoying these podcasts, please leave me a review and a ranking because that is how other people are going to learn about this podcast. Thanks for listening. And we'll see you next time.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 13: Naming Your Puppy or Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 18: 4 Puppy and Dog Training Games for Acquired Bite Inhibition](#)

[Shaped By Dog Podcast Episode](#)

[Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog](#)



# What Is Your Identity as a Dog Owner?

### 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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