

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Hey, everybody. Welcome back to Shaped by Dog. I am Susan Garret and I have a question for you. Why do you own a dog? And if you don't have a dog yet, why are you thinking of owning a dog? What is it that you envision is the main benefit to owning a dog? You're going to let that sit with you for one second.

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For most of you, I think it would probably be similar to why I own a dog. It's companionship because we love dogs. We love dogs. We love how they make our lives better. Is that not similar to why you are in any other relationship? Why do you have a spouse? It's companionship because they make my life better.

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So, if that is true, why we call this thing that we do dog training? We don't call it husband training. Although there might be a market for that. I'm not entirely... don't want to discount that one. We don't call it wife training or girlfriend or boyfriend training. We call it having a relationship.

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Now, if we were all, I just think it's a disservice to dogs that we call it, this thing that we do, dog training. And it goes back to origins of dog training. Dogs were trained to go to war with people. And so, it was a very militant approach to training. They must do this, and it was a very forced base training methodology that we took. You know, I believe human beings, right from the beginning of time, it's a journey of evolution in that we raise our level of consciousness.

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Think of how a hundred years ago children were raised. It wasn't about relationship. It was about, you know, do as I say, be seen and not heard and, you know, spare the rod, spoil the child. It was more of a force-based relationship. Right. You do as I say or else, and I'm so happy to say that when I watch young people with their children today, it's really more about engagement, enrichment, allowing that child to show you who they are and supporting that direction for them. That's an ideal relationship.

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And you know, a relationship is about doing your best to bring out the best in somebody else. Oh, you don't go into a relationship going, “well, how are you going to serve me?” If you do, it's exhausting for the other person and you likely are going to spend the day every day in judgment of that other person and figuring out how you can not be so disappointed in that other person.

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If you look at relationships, if both parties of the relationship looked at, “how can I be better for you so that our relationship together can be amazing?” If that is the way each person approached the relationship, instead of saying it's 50 50 and you need to be, meet me halfway, you approach it, its, “How can I make your life better?” And how in both people did that, what an amazing relationship you would have.



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That's the way I like to look at my relationships with my dogs and I, it even hurts me to say dog training. That's how I approach my relationships. Is if there's something I would like you to do, for example, I love the sport of dog agility. Then how can I make every moment you spend training dog agility to be the best moment of your life. And sadly, that isn't always the way people approach dog training. If you have the mind set that this is a relationship, then every single decision you make is going to be on, how do I make that relationship better?

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Now people would say, we need to use a shock collar on our dog because it's kinder. It is what having a good relationship would be all about. I would beg to differ and I'm not here to bash tools that other people use because that's their journey. And at their point in their dog training, that's what they feel is right. Nobody makes decisions for their dog because they think that this is just going to be fun. I'm just going to do, do this and cause my dog pain, because it's going to be fun. Every person is sitting exactly in the same place as I am, and they want to make the best decisions for their dog.

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So, I want everybody listening to this podcast know everybody is welcome. No matter what path you are on right now, no matter how you choose to train your dog. My goal is if I can inspire you and just looking at the way that I train, even if it is just for one area, maybe it's just to teach your dog to walk on leash, teach your dog to retrieve that you're going to look at a different way.

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I remember many years ago, my late husband was a very popular obedience judge and he would travel all over the world, quite honestly, judging obedience competition, occasionally I would go with him. I remember being in Syracuse, New York, and we were at a dinner with obedience judges because they have these big dinners at the end of the day. The discussion went around to training, which for me just turn to drinking heavily because I was avoiding the discussions of training. Because I know back then, we're talking 30 years ago, my views were in a hundred percent conflict to the norm of way people thought dogs needed to be trained.

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The discussion at the table that night went around to how amazing their puppy classes have been since they put shock collars on the eight-week-old puppies as they come in the class. They can teach so much more and so fast. And if I'm, you know, obviously I had to bite my tongue, which I wasn't great at, but I did because of my relationship with John, that was my most important thing at that time. And so, if, no matter what path you're on, if there's something that you can glean from this podcast, everybody is welcome. Everybody is welcome. And I, and I love to hear contrarian points of view on the way that you look at the raising and relating to dogs.

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So back to our dogs and relationship, I did a video, I think it was in 2004. I was asked to be a keynote speaker. It was a national championship event for dog agility. And so I put together what I think was downloads from God himself, presentation about how I look at my life with dogs, that it is a journey and that I am becoming a better person because as I train my dog, give them information on how to be inspired by in the direction I want them to be, they actually are training me. And that's what a great relationship is about. Is that you learn from each other.



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It isn't a one-way street. I'm teaching you this and then my job is done. No. That's one of the most amazing part of growing this relationship with your dog about experimenting and enriching their life. As you get feedback, they give you direct feedback in their behavior. Okay. So, let's take a example of going for a walk with your dog. If your goal is that dog have the most amazing life, what would that look like? What tool would you pick? Would it be a dog on a flat collar? Would it be a head halter? Would it be a harness? Would it be a pinch collar, a choke chain, a shot collar.

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Well, Susan, if my goal is my dog to have amazing life, I wouldn't want them to have, to have be the restraint of being on a leash and collar at all. I want them to have this amazing life. Okay. So, let's just say we want the dog to choose what they want, and the dog would say, “Hey, I got pee mail to read. I got to deliver some pee mail on my own. I can't have the constraint of being attached to you.” That's what walking should be about. And if you asked your dog, if it was a brand-new relationship, that's what they would say. Take that leash and collar off of me. But we don't. Why?

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Because safety, we can't walk our dog in the street and have them off leash and potentially be hit by a car, run off. So, safety is our number one priority, and that's what a good relationship is about, creating safety first. We need to be able to control the dog's choice is whether we be in a city street or out in the country where they can run off and chase a porcupine or a skunk or a coyote or something and they're gone.

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So, it's control. We need to be able to control their choices. In my last podcast, podcast number 27, I spoke about there's really three ways that we can address any challenge that we have. It is number one, we can ignore it. So, my dog wants to be off leash and there's some danger, we could ignore that and say, “come on, let's have at it.” And a lot of people do and suffer the consequences. Or we could manage it. That's what a leash is all about. A leash and collar is managing your dog's behavior. I.e. controlling it until, you know they're going to make great choices.

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And then the third option is train it. And for something like walking, I prefer to train it. Now I'm not going to be stupid. My dogs are brilliant, and they would walk on my side off leash, but I wouldn't take them into a busy street where there is a chance something could scare them and they would startle off into the street and be hit by a car. So even if you have a brilliantly trained behavior, I would still recommend you use a leash and collar or harness or head halter or whatever.

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But at that point it's basically just there for show. It's not going to be engaged. So, we need those leash and collars for control. You know, the word control in dogs is taboo. People are like, “Oh, we can't really control them.” And we can't. Dogs at the end of the day, they have free will. All that we can do when our dogs make a choice we don't like is control our responses to those choices.

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If you, let go of the thought that you can control the dog, it is freeing. If you go back to The Journey, the video that I presented, and it was all about the path we are on for learning.



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I go back to the very first dog that I formally trained. The first two, the school that I was at, they use food in the forms of lures, but that really was to candy coat the overall presentation of ‘dogs need to do it or else’. So, the dogs were put on a choke chain and if they didn't do what we wanted, we were to give them a correction. And that is, we needed to control the dog. And dogs are so brilliant that they will shrink away.

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They won't let their inner freak flag fly. Because they won't have the confidence to be themselves around you for fear of being told, “ah-ah, no” correction. And so, they will shrink into this role of who you need them to be. For me, I love to see that inner freak flag in my dogs. I love to see who they are and if who they are doesn't match with who I would like them to be, then that's where my role as relating to them, training them is inspiring them to want to go in this direction.

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But at the end of the day guys, you've got to honor who that dog is. And look at the strengths of that dog and use those strengths in the way that is going to enhance your life. Again, I love the sport of dog agility, so some of my dogs have been very great at turning tight. Where other, other my dogs are, I've just not been able to get a super tight turn. And so, for those dogs, I'm going to build on the strengths of, man they are fast, so we can turn wide fast and make up that time.

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All right. So, it is looking at who is your dog, allowing them to be who they are, making the conscious choice to either ignore or to manage or to train the dog training challenges. And obviously when it's something like walking on a leash, picking a collar or harness is a form of control, but picking one that ultimately supports the direction of training so that the dog does get that freedom.

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So, for example, if you put your dog on a halter or a harness and a flexi. And they're just like allowed to do whatever they want. And then you're saying, “well, I'm kind of giving them that free will that they can go where they want, and they can smell all the pee mail on our walk.” Really what you're doing, you're walking with a crutch. You aren't training. You are saying to your dog, this will be the extent of the freedom in your life for the rest of your life.

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And I got to be honest with you. You're annoying the crap out of the rest of us who walk opposite to you and have to trip over that long line because you can't get the lock done fast enough. And you're potentially creating a really dangerous situation with that retractable long leash. Retractable leashes, I am not a big fan of. The only time I would ever use one, is if I have a geriatric dog who maybe they can't hear and they can't see, and I want to give them some freedom in a park where they're not familiar with it.

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All right. So, look at your choices. Think of yourself, not as a dog trainer, but a dog learner. Think of yourself as not wanting to control, but wanting to relate, wanting to enhance and make that animal's life better by growing this amazing relationship together.





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And that amazing relationship is looking at what would be the things that your dog would put up their hand and say, “Hey, I would love to be able to do this.” What if they had the list of what we're going to be doing today? What would that look like? And if it isn't match what you want, but you know, it's a Beagle and my Beagle just wants to put his nose down and go, um, smelling things. Well, how are we going to get that beagle, wanting to love agility?

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It doesn't matter what the dog's current loves are. If they have love for anything, we can use that love and transfer that value into love for something that you want. But it is a process that you need to be patient with. Going back to the question I asked to start this podcast, why do we have a dog? It's for companionship and to make our life better. Then there is no room, in my opinion, for the need for control.

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We want to inspire the dog to self regulate, to do what we want because of the transfer of value that we put in for the things that are important to us. Today's podcast was all about you thinking, why you have a dog? What a great life looks like to your dog? And how you can inspire them through the choices they make and paralleling the choices you want them to make?

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We got many more ways to explain to you how that's going to happen here on Shaped by Dog, but I'd love to read your comments. What does this mean to you? And are there things that you are currently find yourself that you are managing or ignoring, and you'd really like to train? Maybe I can help you out there.

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That's it for Shaped by Dog for today. We'll see you next time.

Resources:

[The Journey Video](#)

[Podcast Episode 27: Do Dogs Need Rules?](#)



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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