

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Hey, everybody. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And before we get started today, I just want to give a shout out to a reader who I'm not going to read their letter, because it was actually a criticism of me. But, you know, when we know better, we do better. And what this reader said is she had a young nine-year-old who loved listening to my podcasts, but that she felt she couldn't let this child listen to them all because sometimes I say things that are more adult in nature. And I hear you and sometimes I'll say things just to be funny, but hey, I would love to think that I'm helping to shape the future of tomorrow's dog trainers.

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So, I am going to give you my word that I am going to do my best to make all of my podcasts, PG-3. Let's not even go from 13. Let's go all the way down to 3. Let's start training those three-year-olds to be kinder to their dogs. Okay to start today's podcast I have a question for you. Would you like a well-behaved dog at the expense of having a happy dog? I'd like you to think about that.

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Would you say I would prefer a well-behaved dog and I will forgive a little bit of my dog being happy? Would you make that trade off? Because a lot of people ask you to do that depending on the way they are suggesting you train your dog. Now, how do we define happy? You could go to [episode 4](#) on Shaped by Dog where I talked about the TEMP - Tail, Ears/Eyes, Mouth, Posture of the dog. Because a dog will tell us volumes about how they're feeling. What's going on in their brain and their heart just by the posture that they're taking and their physical appearance. But you could also think of the opposite of happy.

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Would you be willing to make your dog a little sad, a little confused, a little anxious, a little worried, a little stressed, a little afraid of you in order to have a well-behaved dog? And this question came to me because as I watched my young puppy start to poop on my floor yesterday, this podcast came to my mind. Because I recognized with every dog I've ever owned, my approach to training them, to helping them to become a member of my family and fit into this life that I live, that my approach has become more Zen-like with every dog I've ever owned.

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So, as I watched my puppy start to poop on the floor, in the '80s I was taught when your house breaking a puppy, you want to stop them in the act. You want to stop the flow if they're peeing, you want to stop them from pooping by scaring them by saying, "Hey!" or "Ah-ah-ah". And I can remember doing that and the look on those puppies' eyes was like, "Hey, you're not the person I thought you were. Hey, now I'm a little bit afraid of you."

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And when This!, my most recent puppy started to poop and all that I did was call her like "quick, quick, quick, let's get outside, let's get outside." And I picked her up and we ran outside. And the difference from my early dogs, thank you guys, to this puppy in my approach is completely different.



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And it has been an evolution for me. And it made me think of a common thing that people say to me when they meet my dogs is they say, "Your dogs are such characters, they are such goofballs. Like they're all uniquely individual personalities and they're goofy." And I believe that's because of the clarity of expectations that my dogs live with. That they know exactly that they can trust. That whoever they show to me, I'm going to be okay with that. And we're going to work together.

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Some people who would lead you to believe that training the way I suggest dogs should be trained, won't work for all dogs. And they might even suggest that your dog is different, and your dog needs a different approach. And I guess that's up to you to decide, which is why I pose that question. Would you be willing to trade off a well-trained dog for a happy dog? If you had to give one.

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And I think back to, you know, the question of how to help a puppy understand not to go to the bathroom inside. It comes to my mind this phrase, to what end. So, what if screaming at, or getting her to freeze makes the house training happen a little faster? Really, it's my responsibility, that dog pooped in the house because I didn't do a good enough job containing her environment and getting her outside when she needed to.

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So why do I have to break that trust between her and I by screaming at her when it was my bad anyway? I remember back in the '80s, I was teaching dog training at a school and in puppy classes, after puppy classes they would gather the group around and we would teach a little puppy lecture. And one of them was on and I think, I don't know, week four or five we talked about puppy nipping. And what we taught the students to do, we would ask for a demo dog. "Does somebody have a puppy that nips?" "Yeah." "Okay. I'll take little Rover and little Rover was so happy." "Hi. Hi, happy puppy coming up all wiggly and I want to see you. Oh, hi, happy puppy."

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We would take Rover by the collar and we'd encourage Rover to, we would pat his mouth until he nipped at us. And then we would shake him, scold him and give him a little smack under the chin. And the look in these puppy's eyes was one of complete devastation. Now the most amazing thing about dogs is that God gave them more forgiveness than he gave any one of us.

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And so, they put up with the crap that happens to them in the name of training and they still roll with the punches, but there is still a breaking of the trust. Now you can go back to some of my earlier podcasts to see how I teach a puppy not to nip and I can assure you it is nothing to do with physical intimidation or mental intimidation.

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So, the question I have for you to consider is, are my actions and my decisions to help my dog understand how they can fit into my life, increasing their happiness, increasing their trust in me, or decreasing their happiness and decreasing their trust in me? And then you've got to question, why did you get a dog in the first place?



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Did you bring this being into your house just so you could be a ruler over that creature? Did you bring them in to add more anxiety and stress into their life? Did you bring them in to just make them a slightly more unhappy so they could learn to fit in with your rules? I would certainly hope not.

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Then if your goal was to have this amazing partnership and this amazing family pet, why settle for less in the name of to what end? Getting them trained faster? Possibly it might get trained faster, possibly not, but there will always be fallout with choices that involve intimidation or coercion. And I understand that there are some dogs that came to you anxious. Some of you have rescue dogs that there's some anxiety already there.

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So, the question then is, are your choices and training decisions adding more anxiety to that poor soul? That's the question that I would just like you to consider. You know, for all of us human beings, what we learned first, we learn best. So, we get really, really good at blame and judgment if we were taught to raise and train our dogs with blame or judgment. But we can change. It just takes conscious thought. And you might want to review [podcast number 20](#) here on Shaped by Dog where I talked about bridging the gap between blame and kindness in dog training.

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That might be a good first step for you to take. And also, if you are sitting there in this position, don't beat yourself up for what may have happened in the past. Maya Angelou says, "When we know better, we do better." And all we can do is do better. Even if you are a first-time dog owner, even if you're a first-time puppy owner. You might not know the exact signs of is your dog happy or is your dog stressed or confused or anxious. But you can make the decision that everything you're going to do is going to add to that dog's confidence and add to their trust and add to their joy of life.

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Now I'm not saying let the dog be a little hoodlum. My dogs have very, very clear rules in their life. But they are raised in an environment where the rules are very, very clear. And when they show me that they understand and have success with these rules, they're given more freedom, more choices. At first, I might keep the puppy in a [little pen](#), like the one you see behind me if you're watching this on YouTube. And I can supervise her there a lot easier than giving her the roam of the whole house.

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When she has success there, she gets more and more freedom, in a very short time she's living her life just like the rest of my dogs. Probably within six months, she lives with the same kind of freedom of all of my dogs. So, forgive yourself and dig into the knowledge of how to do this, regardless if you were a first-time dog owner or not, your goal is to create clarity for your dog.

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Okay. So, what can you do now? What if you come home and your dogs shredded a couch, or you come home, and your dogs pooped on the rug? Our dogs, they take on our emotions. They can tell when we're angry, when we're frustrated, when we're disappointed and quite honestly, whatever your dog has done, they've done it because you have given them the permission to do so.



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So, if you're going to be angry, frustrated, or disappointed in anybody, be angry, frustrated, and disappointed in yourself and do not let your dog even think that they had something to do with it. You can do better at setting up their environment to be successful and you can plan your responses. Plan your responses.

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So, know that, you know, when I come in the house, if the puppy has peed somewhere, I'm just, I'm going to like, "okay, I'm not going to be disappointed. I don't want my puppy to pee anymore. I'm going to get my puppy outside and then I'm going to put them somewhere. And then I'm going to clean up the mess. And then I'm going to maybe pour myself an adult beverage, or maybe open up a, some of my favorite vegan chocolate chip cookies.

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And I'm going to get over myself. Then I'm going to come up with a plan on how I can do better for that puppy. No matter what the struggle or challenge, no matter what you've walked into. And if you are challenged to do this, then you've got to decide what could that puppy do or that rescue dog do that would cause you to completely lose the plot? And then do your best to prevent that from ever happening.

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And if you say, "Well Susan, I can't. I don't believe in all these rules. I think I got to let a dog be a dog." You know, when I was doing some research for this podcast, I looked up what is the antonym for anxiety? And the first thing that came up as an antonym for anxiety was clarity. The opposite of anxious is clear.

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It said a certainty, serenity and tranquility is the opposite of anxiety. So, we can create certainty with our dogs just by showing up and being the same person being consistent for them. You might be learning together. Again, you might be a first-time dog owner. It's okay. But the choice is yours. You know we're all going to make mistakes. Just yesterday, I was doing some filming for one of our agility memberships, [Agility Nation](#), and I was using my puppy. She's 10 weeks old.

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And over the course of three hours, I brought her in to do a lot of different little video shoots and she was amazing. She was nailing it, and it almost makes me forget that she's a 10-week-old puppy until at one point she was in what we call the hot zone. She was just sitting up, chilling out on the bed and I was talking to the camera and she said, "Right, union rules, I'm done." And she got off the bed, which is unusual. She would never go.

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So, I said, "Hey, little This! hop it back up there. And she got on the bed and then got this look in her eye like "I, I think I'm done." And then she took off and ran around the bedroom, grabbed one of the toys I was playing with her and then ran to her favorite spot, which is under my bed. She loves to play bitey face with her mother from under the bed. So, she'd come out and look at me. And that was her showing her stress about what went on.



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So, I felt bad about it. I mean, I laughed because it was funny, but there was nothing I did to add to more stress. I didn't say, "Hey, Hey, Hey, I told you to get on that bed. That's where you should be in the hot zone." She let me know I'd made a mistake and I believed her. So, the choice is ours. You can be a dictatorial alpha kind of leader. You can be a benevolent leader who creates clarity through kindness, in everything you do in all of your interactions with your dogs.

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You see that look a bewilderment in your dog's eyes, that look of a broken trust that you see. That dog with their ears pinned back or their whites of their eyes showing when they go, "Who are you? I didn't, I've never seen this side of you before." Or the dog who gets the zoomies because they don't know how to please you. Or the dog who has that so-called guilty look or the look of shame on their face. And maybe it's the dog who turns away from you while you're working, and they just start sniffing and you're supposed to be training together.

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Those are looks of confusion. Those are looks of broken trust. That dog is letting you know, you did not do a good job of hiding your frustration or disappointment or anger. That dog is helping you to become a better dog trainer. That dog is helping you to become a better dog owner. And that dog is helping you to become a more compassionate human being.

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And that my friend is how you too get Shaped by Dog. I'll see you next time.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[Blog Post: It's Time to P-o-t-t-y! Inside Scoop on Housetraining](#)

[Podcast Episode 17: Help! How do I STOP Puppy Biting?!](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 6: The Art of Manipulation](#)

[Podcast Episode 20: Bridging the Gap Between Blame and Kindness in Dog Training](#)

[Agility Nation](#)



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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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