

# Don't Wanna, Don't Hafta: What To Do When Your Dog Refuses To Obey

### 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 have a dog, there will come a time when your dog is going to say this to you, and that is “don't wanna and I don't hafta”. You're going to ask them to do something, it might be, come when he sees a squirrel. Yeah. “Don't wanna, don't hafta.” Or it could be that you have thrown a toy and he sees other dogs running and he's, yeah, “I don't wanna, don't hafta”.

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Obviously, dogs don't actually say those things, but the appearance could be that that is what the dog is saying to you. So, the question is, if you're listening to this podcast, chances are you are trying to train your dog in a reinforcement-based program. The question is, what do you do now? When my dog says don't want to, don't have to.

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In the old way I used to train with more punishment, I would scold him. I would say, you know, that's not right or I might put his leash on and correct him. I said, “come” pop, “come” pop. That seemed like a logical thing. No, that's not the solution that Susan Garrett would choose. And yes, my dogs, there will come a time when they will say “don't wanna, don't hafta”. And if you keep listening, you'll find out what I will do.

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But I'm first going to preface this by sharing something that I heard recently, I was sitting in my business mastermind. Now I belong to this mastermind for more than 10 years and we normally get together in person for three days at a time, three times a year.

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Obviously with COVID, we can't do that. And so, we meet on zoom and Annie Hyman Pratt who is in our group, she had this amazing, profound statement that she was, you know, sharing something in our business and I'm like, wow, that is so applicable to dogs. And what she said is that it's important that we all value compassion more than we value ambition.

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I'm going to say it one more time. It's important to value compassion more than we value ambition. Now, if you're sitting there and listening to me and you're saying, “Well, I'm not an ambitious person. Yeah. I know Susan, you're a world champion. You're ambitious. I'm not ambitious.” If you own a dog, you have ambitious goals. You would like that dog not to potty in your house.

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Now there's various scales of ambition. And so that might be the base level with a dog. All I want is for him not to potty in the house. Now your ambition grows as your expectation for that dog as a family pet grows. And I think it's every, you have every right to have great [expectations](#). Because I believe that's what creates a better relationship with a dog.



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Is when you have expectations and you spend the time educating the dog and how their behavior and your desire of their behavior can become the same thing. So, obviously for those of us who want to compete in performance sports, this becomes more and more obvious. And I see it even in the lowest level of agility where somebody just wants to get a title or get a leg and their dog is like, obviously not enjoying the game.

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And it all goes back to the way the dog was trained. Every dog could learn to enjoy agility. Every healthy dog could learn to enjoy agility if they are trained properly. Absolutely no doubt in my mind. But you see some dogs that are distracted, and they start sniffing and they're walking between the obstacles. That could be that you have put your ambition ahead of compassion for the dog. And so, when my dog says don't wanna, don't hafta, my ambition is not going to override my compassion.

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Yet I still want my dog to do what they're told. Is that possible? Yes, it is. Because a dog who says "don't wanna, don't hafta", it all goes back to competing values. That they find one thing more valuable than what you're suggesting to them. It's like a friend saying, "Hey, do you want to go out to a movie? Or do you want to, you know, stay in?" "Eh, I think I'll stay in." or "No, I'd love to go to a movie." There's some competing values. You have to make that decision.

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So, every time we ask our dog to do something, there could be something else in the vicinity that they might prefer to do. For example, every morning in the wintertime, Tater Salad is curled up in front of the fire and we say, "It's time to go outside for a pee, Tater." And he says, "Really no, I'd prefer to stay by the fire." Competing values, minus 30 degrees outside, or I'll stay by the fire, thank you. Take the Border Collies. Competing values.

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Now it's important for you to understand all the things that I'm going to say. I'm going to reference a number of different podcasts. Past podcast episodes that I strongly encourage you to go back and check out. Most recent one would be a great one where I asked [is your dog trying to dominate you](#). And I share with you how the filter of how we see our dogs affects the training decisions that we make. And so, my filter is our dogs are doing the best they can with the education they've given us in the environment we're asking them to perform.

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And when they say "don't wanna, don't hafta", we need to ask ourselves, is it education? Is it environment? It may be a couple of other things and we'll get to those in a second. So, what we want when we're looking at this, "don't wanna, don't hafta", I would ask you to consider what stage of learning is your dog at.

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So, in [episode number 44](#), I talked about coincidences and positive associations. And in there I shared with you a great chart to live by where I share the stage of learning and how we make what we want our dog to do the most obvious choice. Okay. So that is super important. When we have these competing values, we also need to consider, is it fear?



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Is our dog not doing what we're asked because they're afraid? And I'll give you an example of that. I was in class with my puppy This! on the weekend and what we did, it's a phenomenal little puppy gym where we do all sorts of fun things. She loves it. Now every once in a while, the owner of the school says, all right, we're going to do something like today I'm going to bring out the vacuum and move around. And This! was not great with the vacuum coming at her, but I was able to keep her engaged.

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Linda, the instructor said, "Okay, I'm going to now drive my golf cart around inside of the building." And it's a great big turf building. So, you get your puppies ready the way you need to. And so what I did is I had my hot zone and I brought it right near the door that we came in and I opened the door just to crack because I knew that This! has always been a little bit worried about seeing cars coming towards her and other moving vehicles and I've been working on it, but she's only 13 weeks old and this is a potential fear period for a puppy of that age.

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And so that's where I chose. So, I had her on her hot zone. I'm giving her a reinforcement and when the golf cart comes and it was on the other side of the room, came down towards in our direction but on the other side of the room, she immediately got off the hot zone and saw the open door and just went and stood outside and peeked in. Just kind of looking in. She said, "don't wanna, don't hafta. I'm getting off this hot zone." But it was not a conscious decision. It was fear.

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That needs to be a consideration. Like I mentioned in [episode number 46](#), when your dog is showing signs of anxiety or stress or fear, they're not saying "I don't wanna, don't hafta", they're not saying "talk to the paw". They're saying, "Please, please take the paw. Please help me." And so that's exactly what I did is I arranged coincidences for This! so that it was okay for her to still be part of this program with the confidence from looking from the outside in.

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So, let's say you're training with some really exciting food, steak. And you're doing, you're getting some great training behavior. And then you say to your dog, "Okay, now let's tug." And the dog says, competing values, "No, no, we don't have to tug now. No, you can just give me more cookies. No, that, that, that, that steak was really good." That's a "don't wanna, don't hafta" moment. That's one that I love. So, let me share with you my five keys, key important things about don't wanna, don't hafta.

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Number one I already shared is decide if it's fear. If it's fear, then you need to help that dog. Number two don't reinforce what's just going on. So, if the dog says, "I don't want the tug toy, please give me more cookies." Don't give that dog more cookies. You are reinforcing the dog for saying, I don't want to do what you want to do.

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My ultimate goal is that my dog never says "don't wanna, don't hafta". Yes, there are ways they can say to me, I don't feel comfortable with this, but they won't say "I'd rather chase the deer than listen to you." In order to get that without the use of punishment, we need to be really conscientious and focused and intentional about how we use our reinforcement.



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And so, we are not going to look at a dog who's saying "don't wanna, don't hafta" and reward them for doing that. Okay. You also might want to look at [episode number 42](#), it talks about behavior chains. You actually may be part of reinforcing this already. All right. Key number three is I've always talked about when you have a behavior challenge, there's three things you can do. You can ignore it, hope it gets better, manage it or train it. A lot of times training it involves management.

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So, when you have a don't wanna, don't hafta moment number one thing you want to do is keep your dog safe. So, do what you have to do to keep that dog safe. And if that is reinforcing them at that moment, so let's say you're near a busy highway, your leash breaks, your dog says, "Oh, I'm going to chase the deer." And if you've got a pile of cookies, say, "Hey, mama's got a cookie." I do what you have to do to keep that dog safe. I don't care if you reinforce, I don't wanna, don't hafta moment one time because safety overrides everything.

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But you need to now say, "Okay, I found a time where my dog won't listen to me." Go to your journal, write that down. That is a don't wanna, don't hafta moment. So, now I'm going to go to .4, you're going to evaluate what have I really trained. Now the reason I had my dog off leash near deer is because I was pretty confident, he would come when he was called otherwise, I never would have taken that leash off. Or were you pretty confident that the deer would stay away? That's a bad bet. I wouldn't take that one.

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Evaluate what you have really trained, because if you really believe your dog would come in when they're recalled, then you have to look at, is your training flawed? How you trained that recall, or is it the environment that you asked the dog to do the recall? So, you over face the dog with your expectations of that environment. So, every time you see a don't wanna, don't hafta moment go to your journal, write it down so that you can evaluate what have I really trained? Because we believe that our dogs are not just being stubborn or blowing us off or, you know, giving us a doggy digit. Correct. Good stuff.

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So, the fifth thing, and this is the key. I create don't wanna, don't hafta moments in a way that I can control the outcomes. And I'm helping my dog rehearse doing what I asked every single time I ask. All right. So, what does that look like? It's as simple as the [It'sYerChoice game](#). I've talked about It'sYerChoice. If you haven't played this before just look to the show notes and you'll see a link where we will share how you can play It'sYerChoice with your dog.

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And with It'sYerChoice, the dog sees what they want, and it might be a really, that piece of steak and I'll close my hand around it if they try to steal it. And they're like, "No, that's what I want." And so, I wait until they back away and then I open it up and when they can ignore that, then I'll give it to them. So, I'm taking a dog who's saying, "Oh, I have a competing value. I just want to steal." And I'm saying, "No, I don't want you to steal. I would like you to wait, be focused, be intentional, and we'll do this together." That's the first level.



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And then I progressed from there to, we talked about it on [episode 24](#), help for dogs who want to chase chipmunks. And that was a really important episode for you to understand when we're talking about don't wanna, don't hafta. And there I shared with you my [distraction intensity index](#). Super important when we're dealing with competing values. We need to lower the value of the one the dog wants and bump up the value of the one that we'd like them to have.

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So, the number two don't wanna, don't hafta moment that I set up for my dogs is I get cookies that I know they love, and I asked them to tug. And my Terriers, when I did this with them, first off, they said, "Pfft, don't wanna, don't hafta." And as I shared on [episode number 24](#), I just then put the cookies on a chair and move further away. So, I lowered the value of the cookies by getting the dog further away. Until the dog could tug right beside the cookies. And now my puppy This!, I could have cookies anywhere. They could be on the floor, just in a pile and she won't try and steal them when we're training. And she won't even think about them. She knows cookies or something for her to earn.

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Okay. The next step I might do is my dogs they, we live on acreage here and they love to rip, and that is so stimulating for any puppy to see. So, I might go right at the front door, inside the house and get some real good tug game going on. And then I'll open the door and step outside where the other dogs are, and the dogs might not even be moving and ask her to tug. She may say, "don't wanna, don't hafta. I'm focused on the dogs." I'll just go back inside, get her to tug.

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So, every time I can set up a situation where she says don't wanna, don't hafta, and I can help her understand how important it is for her to always do what I asked. I'm helping her to rehearse never say no when I ask you to do something. On that front porch, I'm getting her to tag and then I might go—and then it might be getting the dogs to move. Eventually I might have her loose out there with the dogs and ask her to tug and she'll say, "No, I want to chase the dogs."

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And I'll do this just with one dog and to be fair to the dog. This is what I call the good dog test. And you're only going to do this when you've worked up so many layers of don't wanna, don't hafta. The good dog test is, have another good dog out there, call your puppy, the puppies, or ask your puppy to tug or do something with you, hand touch. And your puppy says, "No, I want to go chase that dog." The don't wanna, don't hafta moment, you just ask a good dog to lie down. That way you can collect your dog, using the DII, move your dog further away, put them on leash. Remember, manage as you train and ask again.

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Now that you failed that test, you're not going to ask them again until you put a lot of value into doing what you want, because what you want is a game. And eventually your dogs know that you're the keeper of the joy and nothing is more fun than playing with you. And that is how you get over don't wanna, don't hafta moments. Now there might be one kind of don't wanna, don't hafta that isn't worth trying to train through. And that is a hardwired behavior.





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So, for example, I know my dog Encore, who has a strong herding instinct, she's a Border Collie. When I would train her on the dog walk, if I put a toy out in front of her, she would go super slow and start like she was walking in on a sheep. Walking, instead of running down the dog walk. Now I could have worked through that, train through that and helped her to, you know, not be conflicted with her herding instinct, but herding instinct is hardwired. Why bother? Nobody's putting a toy in the middle of the agility ring. So, I just managed it by not doing it again.

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Okay. So, consider the hardwired behaviors. Those are more difficult to train through. And is it something that you can just manage. Now, if you have a bird dog and they're hardwired behavior is to point birds, it is important that they learn to come when they're called, even in the presence of a bird, so that one is worth working through.

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Okay. So, we have the five critical things I want you to know. Is it fear? Take that paw, do not look at that dog critically. Number two don't reinforce a don't wanna, don't hafta moment unless it's to keep that dog safe. Number three manage when you see one, manage your dog in those environments so they never say don't wanna, don't hafta you again.

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Number four evaluate what have you trained. Because if your dog's saying don't wanna, don't hafta they're saying, "Hmm, you didn't show me yet a cookie, so I'm not doing it." And if that's the case, you really need to peel back your training and take a look at what you're doing. And number five, look to create don't wanna, don't hafta moments in a way that you could manage the outcome. And your dog learns they always listen to what you want because you're the keeper of the joy and all the fun happens through you. That's it for this week on Shaped by Dog. We'll see you next time.

### Resources:

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

[Podcast Episode 46: Is Your Dog Trying to Dominate You and What You Can Do About It](#)

[Podcast Episode 44: Using Coincidences and Positive Associations in Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 42: Behavior Chains: Are You Teaching Your Dog to be Bad to be Good?](#)

[Game: Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice \(IYC\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 24: Help for the Dog who Chases Chipmunks, Bicycles, and the Neighbor's Cat](#)

[Blog Post: How to Use the Distraction Intensity Index to Help Your Dog](#)



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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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