

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Today as I think back on the last year dealing with this global pandemic, having lived in lockdown, unable to travel, my normal life is I'm heading off on a plane somewhere at least every other week. But I basically have lived in this house and on this property for a year now since February of 2020.

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And it makes me think about stress. So today on the podcast, it's all about stress and how we deal with it. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. I'm going to tell you a story about my very first dog. Her name was Shelby. She was a phenomenal agility dog, but all my dogs back then would travel with me.

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I was a traveling pharmaceutical sales rep. I went and visited Veterinarians at their clinics. And one time it was a hot summer day. I was in downtown Toronto. Quite often I brought my dogs in or if it was really hot, I left them at home. But this day I just, I was just running in to see a client super fast. I left the car running. I taken the keys with me like a spare set of keys. Went into the clinic. I came back out. I also cracked the windows for the three dogs.

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And I go to open the car door and lo and behold, my keys are sitting on the seat, my spare set of keys that I intended to take in. I had all these thoughts of, should I break the window? And then I, you know, relaxed, it's hot out but the car's running. You've got air conditioning going on in there. And then I had this brilliant idea. I would talk Shelby into bringing me the keys. Because she knew bring or "get dat ting" was her thing - "get dat ting", just look for something to retrieve to me.

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Now, she was in the backseat and my dogs knew they weren't allowed in the front seat. That was the biggest hurdle for me too. Once I got her convinced to come into the front seat, she happily picked up the keys, brought them over to the window and I was able to get those keys. I'm telling you that story because of all the championships she won in the sport of dog agility, when I think of what is my proudest moment of Shelby, that's the first thing that comes to my mind.

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So, while you're listening to this, I'd like you to think about the dog right now that you are having your biggest challenge with in your dog training. And I want you to think of, if somebody was to say, you know, if you had to freeze time right now, looking back in your history together, what would be your proudest moment with that dog? I want you to hold that thought. We're going to come back to it. We're going to talk about stress.

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I don't want to pretend to be an expert on stress. I'm just going to talk about it from a personal experience of what I do and how I deal with stress.



## Episode: #67

# Are You Stressing About Your Dog's Stress?

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I don't want to diminish what is happening, the anxiety and the stress that's going on in the world today. Not just with people sick, but with the mental anguish that's leaving people. I want to talk about stress in relation to our dogs as well as to us. So, when I'm feeling stressed myself, I check in because for me that means I'm not in the moment. If you're thinking about the past, maybe you have a dog that has been reactive to other dogs, and I know that there's a public shame about that.

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I'm going to apologize on behalf of mankind because there shouldn't be. It's, you know, sometimes we do the best we can. And we always are doing the best we can for our dogs, with what we know at that moment. And that leads us to the dog we have, and the dog we have may not – may be aggressive towards other dogs.

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And so, you'll be thinking about things your dog has done in the past and is that going to happen today? And so, if you're bringing that stress from yesterday into today. And every day is a new day. And I know with my puppy This! who I've mentioned in the [last podcast](#), I'm working through her resource guarding. And she resource guards toys, and food and places, locations she's been and me. She resource guards a lot of things.

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And I'm being very intentional about fixing that right now. And I can report in that after seven days of very strategic work, I've seen a huge improvement in the number of incidents in a day that we have. And I can give you exact number. It was an average of fourteen and we're down to an average of two. And the two are not nearly as severe.

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Not that the other ones were horrible, but we're going in the right direction. But it's easy to wake up in the day and go, "oh, who's she going to target today? Who's going to—" The approach I took was this is my beautiful, fun, loving puppy. And I expect that she is going to have a great day. If and when there is an incident - and we've tried to manipulate the environment so that there isn't one.

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But if there is one, my first thought isn't "oh, here she goes again. Oh, just like she did yesterday and last week. Ugh." My first thought is "Wow. That's unusual." Like I want to pattern for my brain that every time she does it is a surprise. Why do I want to do that? Because I don't want to carry the expectation that this puppy's going to make poor choices. Because I'm going a little woo on you here. That's the energy we put out to the dog. And we know even if you don't believe in woo, it's been proven that our dogs [take on our emotions](#). It's science. This isn't just, you know, the magical world of woo. It is science.

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So, I do everything I can as a good dog trainer to prevent things from happening, but I always go to the place of, "Wow. Wow, that's unusual." And I'm going to journal, as I talked about in the last episode. And so, if you're stressing, are you thinking about yesterday or last week or last year or the what ifs, or are you thinking about the future? About, is everything going to work out? Oh, what kind of dog is she going to grow up to be? Oh, is she going to go after another dog? Oh—



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So, if you eliminate those two stressors— why do I say eliminate them? Because they are outside of your control. Yesterday as Zig Zigar used to say, 'yesterday ended last night'. There is nothing we can do to change the history of what's happened. No need to stress about that.

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There is nothing we can do to control what's going to happen in the future other than what we can do ourselves. So, we can't control other people. We cannot control our dogs. All that we can do is manipulate their environment, load them up with great reinforcements for the good choice we'd like to see them make and then be in a place of utter curiosity, amazement and surprise if things don't go the way that you really wanted them to go.

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So, stress is something that is a choice. I know it's difficult. And again, I don't want to diminish those of you who are seriously in some trouble in this past year. But it is a choice. Stress is thinking about things outside of your control. And when you're feeling stressed, you've got to ask yourself, what can I do right now to make things different or better, or the outcome that I want to be more likely to happen. Because we are all in the same place, and that is where we are now with our dogs. Where we are now with our dog training.

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And this goes across anything, any challenge you're dealing with, where we are now with our fitness. Any of you like me, maybe had one too many vegan chocolate chip cookies during lockdown, and now are not in the place we want to be with our fitness. So, where we are today on the one hand and where we want to be in the future.

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And when we're thinking about where we are today, sometimes we create pain or frustration or maybe even anger and resentment for ourselves because of when we think about where we are, "Oh, Susan you know what, you weren't this weight a year ago. That's not good." We keep looking in this magical distant place of where life would be so much better and you know, I'd be at a better weight and I'd have more joy and I have better relationships. My dogs will always listen to me.

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And there's this big gap and that big gap can cause a stress. But you've got to look at where we are today, what can I commit myself to? And if you're listening to this at night, before you go to bed tonight, what can I commit to bring me closer to where I want to be? Because it's just a matter of doing one thing and then the next thing, and then the next thing, and it doesn't matter if it's your dog or your finances or your weight. But of course, we're talking about your dog.

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And so, I want to share with you this exercise I started [on my blog](#). So, I started writing a blog in 2008. So, for more than a decade, I've been giving free dog training advice on a blog. And last year I started the podcast. But in between, there's lots of webinars that I gave and video series that I put out in social media to help people with their dog training. So, I've been doing this for more than a decade. There is a lot of great dog training content out there - that I've put out there. If you are struggling right now, you need to make something better.



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One of the exercises that I gave— now all my blog posts, I always end them with what I'm grateful for. Because I believe gratitude is a way of taking care of tomorrow. Because I believe when we take count of what we're grateful for, anxiety and stress, if not eliminated, are greatly reduced. Because when you are sitting in what's so wonderful about where you are right now, then you can't help but be inspired to make that one micro-commitment that's going to make it better for tomorrow. You just can't help it. So, I want you to do this exercise with me.

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And if you're driving, maybe don't do those shut your eyes part, okay? So, it's called "*Behaving Gracitudinaeously*", and I've only ever had to write it before. I've never had to say it. It's a word I made up. It's massive amounts of gratitude, behaving gracitudinaeously. Gracitudenal— I know there's no "L" there. Gracitudinaeously. That's it. Behaving Gracitudinaeously.

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And so, what I want you to do is I want you to think about one dog. If you've got - if you only have one dog, this is going to be the easy part. If you have more than one dog, then think about the dog that you're training the most right now. Or the one that's giving you the most challenges right now. Or if you can't do that, then put all the dog's name in a hat and draw one out and just think of one dog. It's important that you think of just one dog and tomorrow you can do it with another dog. But one dog a day is what I would— like bask in that one dog's energy for one day.

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So, what you're going to do this behaving gracitudinaeously, you're going to— first— I need to acknowledge this is based on an exercise that I learned from Tony Robbins, probably around the time of 2008 to tell you the truth. What you're going to do first is you're going to ideally be in a quiet place. And if you're at work, that's okay. Just put some dark shades on, say you're on your break, go to a bathroom and say you have a problem, whatever.

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You're going to take a deep breath and close your eyes. And you're going to take another deep breath and just try to clear everything out of your system. Breathing is a way that helps to ground me personally. Helps to ground you and almost helps to put you in a better place stress-wise anyway. All right, now you're going to put your hand on your heart. You're thinking of that one dog. Now I want you to go through a visualization.

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I want to think of in the past year, two years, the good times that you've had that included that dog. What were the things that just maybe you and that dog know about? Now go back to that time where you were the most proud of that dog, the key saving the car time. Now I want you to think, keep your hands on your heart when you're doing this because this is called gratitude stacking. So, we're keeping our hands on our heart and we're thinking about this. A favorite time you had together, maybe you were out hiking somewhere, or maybe you were competing in some sort of sporting event, or maybe you were, I don't know, camp weekend. Where were you that favorite time you were together? Or some time that you regularly visit. See your dog trotting up to you with his tail wagging. Now think about the quality in that dog that you admire the most. The one quality that you're like "Wow. That dog just never leaves my side."



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"Wow. That dog is beautiful." Or it's the happiest tail always wagging. What is it that you admire the most about that dog? Think about a time when that dog's companionship was so important to you. I know for me it was two years ago when my husband passed away. Think about when that dog it was like, "Wow, I'm so glad you're here, buddy."

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Now think about something that dog does really, really well. Even if it's digging holes in your backyard. What is something that dog does brilliantly. Okay. What about a time that dog has just made you laugh out loud? Like he just, maybe it's just the way he was sleeping, or you know, laying upside down or he, you know, came in from the garden with something in his mouth that he shouldn't have, but it was just caught you by surprise and you just burst into hysterical laughter.

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What is a time when you thought, "Wow, you are one brilliant dog."? Maybe it was brilliant in way doing something he probably shouldn't have been doing. Think of a time when you thought, "Wow, you are brilliant." Now I want you to think about we're gratitude stocking. We're just adding more and more and more with your hands on your heart. I want you to think about when you chose to get this dog. This dog in particular. What was it that told you this was the dog you should have? And what did you think about that dog? Something made you say, "Yeah, you're mine." Now I want you to think about why you love that dog.

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So now we've got stacks of stacks of gratitude. From this place you now think about what you're going to do in your training to make life better for that dog. Because then the pain and frustration or whatever you're feeling about whatever challenge you're trying to work through doesn't seem nearly as important.

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If you always come from a place of gratitude, it makes the next step a lot easier. For me it's an exercise I do every single night. I have many routines that I used throughout my day, but the last one every night I say my prayers and I say three things that I'm grateful for. Or three people that I'm grateful for, but three things that happened that day that I'm grateful for and what's going to make tomorrow amazing.

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That's my routine. Thanks for playing along. Let me know what you thought of this. And if you'd like to download, well I'll put a link in the show notes to the eBook that I put together called "*Behaving Graciously*". And it gives this exercise. So, share this episode with your friends. Share this episode with anybody who has a dog that sometimes gives them challenges. I think that they'll appreciate you doing it for them. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

- [Podcast Episode 66: Resource Guarding: Dog vs Dog Aggression](#)
- [Paper: Interspecies transmission of emotional information via chemosignals: from humans to dogs \(\*Canis lupus familiaris\*\)](#)
- [Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog](#)



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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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