

# When You Don't Feel Like Training Your Dog

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG It's not uncommon for anyone to get to a place where you know you should be training your dog today, but you just don't feel it. You just can't motivate yourself to do it, or you might go, "Okay, I'm going to go train my dog." You look around for your dog. And he's like, "Yeah, really? Yeah. That's a hard pass for me." What do you do?

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If you ever found yourself in that place, you're going to love today's podcast episode. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome back to Shaped by Dog. Today I'm going to share some insight from two phenomenal college coaches, because it doesn't matter what you are working on, what you are trying to overcome, what challenges you're faced with your dogs right now. Success leaves clues.

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And successful people know how to overcome those challenges. And that's what we're going to talk about today. In [episode 57](#), I mentioned the acronym **D.A.S.H.**. It's something I've been teaching for way more than 25 years. **D** is desire. How are we going to get your dog focused on you and ready to work? **A** is splitting a behavior and working on just the accuracy of that behavior.

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**S** is once you get that accuracy, the speed just happens. And **H** is the habitat. You've got to generalize that behavior, so it shows up everywhere. **But what if that D the desire is you, not the dog?** We've got to overcome that. Now, one of the things I've mentioned in the past is you've got to [schedule your training time](#) because once it's scheduled it in your daytime, you're more likely to do it. But what if it's scheduled, it's in the daytime where you look down it's 7:00 PM and you should be training, "Yeah, really. Ah, today got away from me. It's been tough. I don't really feel like doing it."

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Here's what you can do. Here's what I do. Number one check in with like, just kind of tune out everything else and check in with myself emotionally. Where is it that I'm feeling? Do, "am I in a state that I really could do justice to training my dog? ". Yeah. If that's a no, please don't train your dog. No good can come from that. Let's go down to step number two - what I do, I release the emotions of the day.

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Number one, massive-big-deep breath in and then out. I might do that two or three times. That always makes me feel better. Number two, I got, these are the three Bs. Number one is **breath**. Number two is **brush**. So, once I've completely oxygenated myself, I just brush off all of any negative energy that may have attached itself to me. Just to— always feel better when I do that. Number three **bounce**.

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Remember when I talked in episode 57 about balance breaks, we really need to change our dog's physiology in order to recharge them to get to work. Well, **do something to change your physiology**. You know, run on the spot. Jump on a rebounder.



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Do something that just gets your heart rate up a little bit and then check back in with your emotional state. Do you feel like training? “Yeah. Susan it’s still a no. Yeah.” Okay. Let’s move on to the first piece of insight from the great college football coach, Lou Holtz. And what he says is “You always need to put the why before the where or the what.” Put the why of your dog training before the— so don’t say, “Yeah, well, this is what I’ve got to train, and this is where I’m going to train it.”

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And we often don't think about the why. The why is important. It reminds me— so Lou's book, *\*[Winning Every Day](#)*, great book. But it reminds me of another book. I'm going to talk about a lot of books in this podcast. This is a business book. So, any of you are interested in business, phenomenal business book called *\*[Start with Why](#)* [Susan holds up Simon Sinek book]. What Lou talks about in this book is that purpose follows passion.

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So, if you aren't really feeling like training think about what are you passionate about? Well, if you're listening to this podcast, I can guess you're passionate about your dog. About the life your dog gets to live. And so that passion is now going to drive the purpose of why you want to train. Your why is because you want your dog to live the best life.

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You want your dog to be able to go off leash with you when you go hiking. You want your dog to come with you when you go visiting people. You want your dog to not feel anxiety when they are walking down the street and they see another dog. You don't want your dog to feel anxiety when you leave them or whatever it is that your challenge is. You feel passionate about your dog that helps to create your purpose, which is your why.

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And from that purpose, from that “Okay, I want my dog to live their best life.” Now, your objectives of what you should be training become really clear. Okay. So, I want my dog to come back when they're called so I'm going to start working on that great [Recallers](#) program that Susan Garrett talks so much about.

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So, now you know whatever it is those pieces that you are working on, your objectives are clear. I want my dog to walk on a loose leash. I want my dog to bring the toy back to me. Now, those clear objectives are what gives you focus for what you need to do. So, for example, if you were really focused on you know, getting a great grade on a test and you know, couple of your buddies' phone you up and say, “Hey, we're going out for a couple drinks. You want to join us?” “Yeah. Um, yeah, I got to take a pass tonight because I got something else on the go.”

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Okay. Maybe that wasn't a great example. But if you're really focused, you're going to pass it up. There's a great quote by Zig Ziglar and he says, “The number one reason for people's lack of success is their willingness to give up what they want most of all for what they want right now.” And if you've got clear objectives, if you've got goals in mind, that creates the focus for you to say, “Right, I want my dog to have his best life therefore I've got these goals. Therefore, that gives me the focus.”



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And when I see training time on my daytime, or I don't, I go "Yay! Let brush off the, let me shake out those cobwebs, let me jump right in and start training This!" That's what gives you the laser focus for what it is that you need to do. Lou says that you're never going to be indecisive about what it is what you should be doing if you have that purpose. That purpose is what brings about the goals that you want to achieve and those goals to help identify what is the daily action you need to be doing?

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And you just ask yourself, have I done anything today to help my dog live that better life? And that's what's going to say, "Right. Yeah. That's my why." You know your why guys, now you can say, "All right, where am I training? And what exactly was I going to train? Oh yeah right. Here's my goals. That's what I'm going to train." Okay. So now you're all - it's probably - you might be listening to this at 11 o'clock at night and you're going to, "I got to train my dog. Wow. I got to train my dog."

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Another great quote by John Wooden. This is awesome. Is, "You should never mistake activity for accomplishment." So, if you are just saying, "Oh, I got to train my dog so I'm just going to go out there and do whatever." That is just being busy. I'm a massive a fan of John Wooden so I have a number of his books. Probably this would be a good one. "[\\*Wooden: A Lifetime of Reflections](#)" (Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court), but I loved his mindset about helping people achieve goals.

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So, if you don't have goals in mind when you're training your dog, you're just going to go out there and have some activity. And that's what John would mean by that quote, is never mistake activity for accomplishment. When you have focus, you are going to be getting your dog closer to that best life. Okay. Now let's focus on the dog. What if, "Okay Susan, I've got my lesson plan because your lesson plan is created by breaking down your goals. I've got what I'm going to do. I've got a dog who doesn't want to train."

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Now, there could be two reasons why a dog lacks focus. First one is they're just not motivated. They're distracted. They're sniffing. They're like, "Oh, I'm so tired." Or you could have a dog that's the complete opposite. That they're running around like their butts on fire. That they are unfocused because it's like, "Oh, look, there's a bird! Oh, look, there's some grass! Oh, is that? Oh, I think someone up!" So, they're all over the place. They're crazy with energy.

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Let's talk about the first dog who is, they're just a little bit "Oh, I'm just, I don't, I'm not feeling it today." You could go through this checklist of maybe the dog is afraid of their environment. Maybe you haven't gone through the **D** process of changing their physiology.

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But it could be that there's a history between the two of you that is overwhelming for the dog. Maybe you had expectations that were massively high, you were disappointed in the dog. The dog failed so many times that the opportunity for reinforcement fell further and further from the dog's mind.



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And so, training just became not worth it. Something called response cost. The level of effort I have to give and the reward you're offering, "Let's just call it a day and not do anything." And people will say, "Well, my dog's an unmotivated dog." And that's just labeling your dog. All dogs could be a dog that, I mean, it's training, it's just playing with you. You're doing it right. The dog's going to love it. And I've taken in many rescue dogs that start out that way. That are just like, "Yeah, I don't really want to do it."

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On either end, they're either crazy high or unfocused or they're just like navel-gazing and "Yeah, I don't, I don't know what you're doing here. I really got nothing." And funny enough the solution to both is very similar, but what most people do with that dog that's navel-gazing and really not interested, and you know, they're checking out how many blades of grass are in this little location right here, they revert to cheerleading where you, "Attaboy! Attaboy! Attaboy!" you start cajoling the dog.

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Now think about professional cheerleaders at football games. If you're losing like 99 to nothing and the cheerleaders come by and go, "Hey, let's give a cheer! Come on! We can do it!" All of a sudden, are you going to cheer? No, you're not feeling it. You know, you might criticize the size of the thighs on the cheerleaders at that point. Right. But no, we're losing 99 to nothing. No, I've lost interest in this.

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However, if your team is tied and it's an overtime and the other team just fumbled the ball and your guy just picked up the ball and they're running towards the end zone and the cheerleaders come by and go, "Hey, let's have a cheer!" You're already going to be screaming. You're going to be screaming because you've been motivated. Cheerleading is just for somebody to lead you somewhere, but it's not true inspiration. It's not true motivation. It's fake.

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They might get you going, but if you're truly inspired by what's going on in front of you don't use the cheerleading and neither does your dog. And what you have is the ABCs of dog training are gone. Because as I talked about on [episode number 16](#), the thing before the thing, the **A**, if you're just cheering, then there is no division between the antecedent and the behavior. Because you are creating the behavior with your cheering.

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And when your cheering stops, guess what, so does the behavior. So, your [helping is not helping](#). What you want to do, and this is a help for both dogs - those that are super high and those that are lacking a focus because they're just not interested - is, you need to create super short sessions with laser sharp focus on your part, starting with high energy and then create a prompt.

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If you have a cue that you're starting with, you're going to give a cue, but it might just be a, you know, it could be something as simple as follow a target stick, touch a target stick. That might be the start of it. And you present it and then you wait. And then when you get any kind of action, you then reward it and go back to the reward mix that we talked about in episode number 59, that reward mix is going to be filled with high end rewards and all of a sudden, the dogs will go, "Hey, I kind of like this."



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And when I say you keep your sessions short, if I have a dog who's lacking focus or drive, that session could be 10 to 30 seconds long and we're done. And the dog's going to go, "What just happened there? That was something that was really cool." But what happens is people get dogs that aren't really driven or motivated and they work them and the dog's going "well, this is fun."

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High drive, it's easy to get rewards and I can touch the stick and everything's fun. And then you keep going and then they start losing interest and then you stop. But you're stopped when the dog is distracted. Not stopping when the dog wants to keep going. If we have a dog who is crazy high and lacks focus, you've got to look at the history of training because a lot of times it's poor timing or poor criteria or overwhelming the dogs.

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And some dogs just stress up higher and higher and higher. So, what is the history of reinforcement? Those dogs look like they're driven, and they don't really need much reinforcement, but the opposite is true. If you give those dogs a higher rate of reinforcement with clear ways, the criteria is very clear how they can be successful.

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Those dogs will give you better focus. I mean, they still may be a dog that is more excitable, but you're going to find that the crazy factor when they're working with you turns into drive and focus for you and the work that you're doing. So once again, short sessions, high, high value rewards. With a dog that's higher like that I would tend to use more food and bigger pieces of food rather than jacking them up higher with toys. Like I would just start with a game of tug and then sit and then food.

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And they might not want that food. So, what you're going to do is you're going to put the tug down and walk further away and give the food again. And keep moving further away in giving them food and when they take the food, you're going to walk all the way back and start that again. So that they understand that eating the food is part of the interactions with you. And when they eat the food, it actually has a calming effect on the brain. Which is why a lot of dogs who are trained only with food sometimes are more difficult to get engaged and get high. Think about that one.

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Hey, I would love for you to know if you are going through this and you say, "Well, I don't really have clear focus. I don't really know what a plan looks like." If you would like me to demonstrate what something like a target stick teaching a dog to touch a target stick, if you would like me to show you what that looks like, leave me a comment.

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Come to [YouTube](#) or leave me a comment wherever you are listening to this if that's an opportunity. Actually, come to YouTube and watch this video, leave me a comment there. I will check these comments. If there's enough interest, then we'll talk about something as simple as creating a plan to get a dog to touch a target stick. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.





# Episode: #60

## When You Don't Feel Like Training Your Dog

### Resources:

[Vlog Post: Get Your Dog Training Done \(And Make Your Week Awesome\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 57: Why Balance Breaks Fast Track Your Dog Training](#)

[Book: Winning Every Day: The Game Plan for Success by Lou Holtz](#)

[Book: Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek](#)

[Book: Book: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court by John Wooden](#)

### [Recallers](#)

[Podcast Episode 16: The Thing Before Your Dog's Thing](#)

[Podcast Episode 12: When Helping Your Dog is an Illusion](#)

[Blog Post: Identifying and Using Positive Triggers for Your Dog](#)

[Watch this Episode of Shaped by Dog on YouTube](#)





# When You Don't Feel Like Training Your Dog

### 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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