

Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:10

SG This past weekend I was out walking my dogs. I had the puppy on leash. My adult dogs were kind of milling about when all of a sudden, a bunny, rather large bunny kind of crossed our path. I don't know, maybe five meters ahead. Now the adult dogs kind of looked up and then just kept doing what they were doing because to those adult dogs that was white noise. That was like, "Oh yeah, there's a rock. There's some dead grass. There's a tree and there's a bunny and..."

00:00:36

To the puppy, however, that was a loud noise. That was not white noise. That was like police sirens, a spotlight and "Hello! Did you guys know I just see that moving critter just go like right in front of us?" Is it that the puppy just doesn't get my training? Or is it the puppy's just, you know - ideally, I'd like to think the puppy is just on the learning phase.

00:01:00

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today we're going to talk about dog training. Why it seems like some dogs just don't get it? And I'm going to give you a checklist of five items that I think are pretty important to make sure you've got included in your training program when you want to make sure your dogs get it.

00:01:19

I'm also going to share with you the layers of learning that I put into my own dog training, both for my own dogs and for all of my students, both those that come here in person and the thousands of students that work with us online. So, if you think of the human education process, there's layers of learnings there, right?

00:01:39

It starts like in pre-K, pre-kindergarten. There was no pre-kindergarten back when I was at school, but in pre-kindergarten, you know, you're getting excited about going away from home and go. And you're excited about what you'll learn today. And you're really, you're learning a little bit of impulse control. Right?

00:01:57

You don't just see the kids playing with something and you grab it because you want it. There's some learning about— and you go to kindergarten and it's kind of a progression of those lessons. You learn to play nice with others. You learn a bit of a socially acceptable behavior that you don't punch and kick and bite and grab what you want.

00:02:14

So that you know by the time you get into the next layer of learnings, which would be like elementary school grades one through six, now you're ready for the fundamentals of learning. This is where you learn the ABCs and you learn the one plus one equals two, right? So those are where we're getting the fundamentals and they just grow on each other.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:02:34

And if you have a middle school. A middle school would be like grade seven and eight. And then you go on from middle school, you go to high school and that's where we're kind of getting building blocks. Progressing our one plus one and our ABCs. We're getting things like algebra and calculus and physics, but still one plus one still always equals two. Right.

00:02:55

And we're learning to manipulate the ABCs into words and sentences and thoughts and beautiful language, or maybe other areas of art. And after high school, then there's university. And this is where things get more complex. Maybe slightly near the end that we start to specialize a little bit. And then we've got layer seven of the education process. Would that be a master's degree? Layer eight would be a PhD. Layer nine that might be like post-doc and layer 10 would be maybe an internship somewhere.

00:03:28

But all the way along the layers just progress. There's an ascension, there's a progression. The building blocks just keep repeating over and just get more intense and more robust. The layers get more robust, but it's still one plus one, it always equals two. Like there's acceptable layers. There's a congruency that we can count on as we progress through as students of learning. Nobody goes from kindergarten and skips and goes to high school or maybe Doogie Howser. I don't, I'm not sure about that.

00:03:59

But for the most of us, we do all of these layers. Right. That we may want to read ahead a little bit, but there's a progression that we're always learning that whole education model. Now, my dog training with my dogs and my students' dogs, it's similar in that it's structured in layers. There's congruency from layer one all the way through to layer 10. One lesson builds on the next.

00:04:24

So, if you were listening to [podcast number 59](#), where I talked about ranking your reinforcements, the first really important thing we learn, we teach our puppies or a rescue dog or new dogs that coming into the program is the value and the intensity of reinforcement and how to grow that intensity for our dogs.

00:04:42

And then the very first game we teach everybody in all of our programs is the [ItsYerChoice game](#). If you haven't played that I'm going to leave a [link](#) in the show notes here for you so that you can learn more about ItsYerChoice. Basically, we are teaching impulse control to our dogs, that they see something that we've just built a lot of reinforcement value for. They see it and they want to steal it, but we teach them through their own choices that they have to earn it. And so, all we do when they try to grab it, we just close our hand around it. And that they learn if they are patient and sit back that they can earn it, it will come to them.

00:05:19

Right. So, the cookie gets in your mouth when you ignore the existence of that cookie, sort of thing. Right. It's like a Zen model. Your good choices earns you the good reinforcement that you want. And that ItsYerChoice is like our one plus one.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:05:38

It is repeated through everything we do all the way up to that post-doctoral education that our dogs get. The lessons are the same that you earn those good choices. So, it might be a cookie in my hand, and then it will be the crate door as we progressed to [Crate Games](#) and other shaping games that you get what you want by making good choices. We don't control the dog. We never say "ah-ah, wrong." We never say "no." We only control the environment. We [manipulate the environment](#) so that the dog has great success.

00:06:15

They always have the freedom to choose. We can't control them. We can just control the outcome of their choices. So, for example, ItsYerChoice grows from our hand to there's a cookie on the floor. Now, if your dog sees the cookie and goes and dives on it, traditionally people would say, "Ah-ah! Leave it. Leave it."

00:06:35

And they might actually, if the dog doesn't leave it and goes and grabs for it, they'll grab for the dog. And they'll maybe pull the dog back or maybe give them a little pop on the neck, on the collar "no, that's wrong. You leave it". You are controlling the dog. I want my dog to learn to make good choices, so I don't have to control them.

00:06:52

So, they make these good choices even when I'm not around. Right. So, what I would do if the dog went to dive on that cookie, I would just say nothing. And I would cover the cookie up. If my hand was nearby, it would be my hand. If not, I might just put my, hover my foot over it. And so, reminding the dog, "remember all the good lessons, the layers of learning that you have?" "Oh yeah."

00:07:12

So that it wouldn't be unusual for my dogs to be walking down the street and them to be like, stop and go "Errr, there's somebody left a cookie on the floor." What they think is a cookie. Right. So, it could be - one time in a park, it was a brownie, and it wasn't like a friendly brownie. So, they look at it, they stare at it and I can reinforce it with something more valuable, like a great piece of meat, "thank you for not eating someone's stash", that's very, very good.

00:07:38

So, we keep progressing these choice-based training and it grows to our [Home School the Dog](#) program has got 12 new games or 12 games that we progress from ItsYerChoice. And there's ways that the dog learns good choices of how not to jump on people, how to stay out from underneath you in the kitchen, the Bring Me! game, where they learn if you grab somebody's underwear, well, somebody ideally is your children. It's not like there's random underwear floating around your home or out in the backyard. But if you grab like a pair of socks or underwear, you're not running off with them. You're bringing them to me.

00:08:10

If I throw a toy, you put it right in my hand, you don't dance around outside of my reach. That there's these are layers of learning that turn things that are a loud noise, they help to dim that noise. Because it's creating focus for us and focus for good choices. From Home School the Dog, we progressed through the 40 [Recallers](#) games that we have.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:08:32

Again, we're growing the same one plus one. We're growing the same ItsYerChoice. But the dog is learning things like don't bolt out the door or if the back gate to the backyard is open, don't go flying out the backyard. Come when you're called. Even if there is a neighborhood cat running by you come when you're called no matter what. These good choices, you know, they're a progression, a progression and ascension.

00:08:57

We don't go, we don't jump layers. All that we do is we keep growing and then we might have students who want to specialize. So, they might want to go into their PhD or their master's degree might be in agility. So, they will then join our [Handling360](#), where they learn a bunch of different games that all lead them to excellence in agility.

00:09:16

So that's how our programs work. And it's exactly what I'm doing with my puppy This!. It's exactly how those dogs that were walking off leash, when the bunny went by their path, they didn't have to be reminded. I know, leave it. It was just white noise. It's like "Tree, rock, bunny. Okay. Let's keep going. We're doing our stuff." Right.

00:09:37

It's an ascension. It's all it's about it's control of two things, rewards - making them a massively reinforcing - and the environment. So, I can't control bunnies, but I don't— notice there was one dog in that story that was on leash. Because I can't control bunnies. So, when that case, the good choices just have to happen within the length of the leash.

00:10:01

Yet we still get students who say, "Well, my dog learned that ItsYerChoice game really well, but he still chased the neighborhood cat. Yeah. I don't know that your program is really working." You don't graduate from grade six in the education program and then apply for a job as a heart surgeon, right?

00:10:23

No. There's more layers of education, specialization that you have to do. And the same is true with your dogs. The only differences I think the dog trainings is probably slightly more fun, right? And so, your dog has learned ItsYerChoice, that's great. That's the foundation layer. Now let's grow it by creating bigger and better decisions for your dog.

00:10:45

Now that's in opposition to a more traditional model of dog training. It would start with having a great value treat, but you hold it as a lure and you're teaching your dog, when you see something, you really want you chase after it. And when you follow it for sit or down or come or heel, you get to eat it. So, chase it and then eat it, chase it and eat it, chase it and eat it. So that's what we're teaching the dogs early on in that model.

00:11:16

But then there gets to be a point where we say, "No, we're going to change the rules on you. Now you should do different." And so, if you see food on the counter, "Ah-ah! Wrong, off." If you don't come when you're called, then it's a pop on the collar.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:11:33

And if that pop on the collar isn't enough, your disobedience needs to be treated with maybe a chain collar or a pinch collar or an electric collar. There's an ascension of punishment because I have put in the work. So, all of a sudden what you learn through the beginning layers has to change. One plus one doesn't equal two anymore.

00:11:58

You can't chase what you want and try and steal it. You need to now learn on your own and do the things that I expect you to do. The onus and the responsibility isn't on controlling reinforcement. It's on you as the dog needs to control your behavior.

And I've had many people who say, "I teach agility with just putting cookies on things, but you know, they don't really want to be serious like you Susan."

00:12:23

And I say, "All of my students learn the same as I do." Because what if you have a student who suddenly says, "Yeah, I think I'd like to put my dog into a trial." You're going to have to say everything I've taught you is wrong. One plus one no longer equals two. This is a better way actually to do things. This is how I would do it with my own dog. So, you want congruency, you want consistency through the layers because that's what makes sense to the dog.

00:12:47

And so, I'm going to give you now a checklist of five things. I don't know why dog training, I mean, there's other reasons why dog training doesn't work for some dogs.

It could be some dogs are just fearful. Like if you're listening to this podcast in your car, and right now you got hijacked or carjacked, somebody put a gun to your head and said, "Keep driving and keep listening to this lady. We're going to give you a quiz on everything she's taught you. I want you to repeat for me what those five things are." As they've got a barrel of a gun in your ribs.

00:13:16

You're going to be terrified. You're not going to take in what I'm sharing with you. And likewise, there's a lot of dogs that have so much anxiety and fear that it's not possible for them to learn. So, we have to deal with that anxiety. Help them with their anxiety and fear and put them into a place for optimal learning where they can be open to learn.

00:13:38

So, there's a lot of reasons why some dogs don't get it. Right. Like sometimes we might be asking a Saluki to become a world-class man trailer. A dog that a Bloodhound would be better suited to. So, you know, there's a great quote that some people say, Albert Einstein said that if you judge a fish by his ability to climb a tree you would think that all fish are stupid.

00:14:04

So, we have to look at what we're trying to teach the dogs and is it really something that they're meant to be brilliant at. But putting all that aside, I think all dogs are capable of learning. Some maybe excelling in other areas, but all dogs are capable of learning. Provided you have these five conditions that I'm going to share with you right now.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:14:24

Check point **number one**, that the dog training program you're working in is structured for obvious success. One plus one always equals two. Our Recaller students, they play the 40 games. They get an obvious transformation. It's that simple. If they play the games the way we've outlined them, they all will get that transformation.

00:14:48

So, the program is structured in a way that success is obvious. It's a solid foundation with a building blocks built on fundamentals. You know, like I mentioned, ours goes from ItsYerChoice and it goes to Crate Games, yada, yada, yada. It's scientifically sound principles in a really good program, the ones that are built for success for dogs, they're scientifically sound principles.

00:15:13

Each layer from the beginning up is focused on building a dog's confidence and growing that confidence and occasionally testing that confidence. The expectations are clear for the dog because Brené Brown says clarity is kind. And so, we want to be kind in the way we train our dogs and the way we approach that training.

00:15:33

Anytime we add distractions, on my blog I wrote [this blog post](#) years ago, saying a distraction is nothing more than a conversation with friends. I liken it to, Dr. Seuss's can you do it in a box? Can you do it with a Fox? It was just we're asking, can you do this? If you haven't, I haven't taught it right. So, I'm going to go back. So, point number one, the program is structured for success with obvious building blocks, one plus one is always equal two and you just grow from there.

00:16:03

Number two, there's motivation to learn within those layers. So, the motivation might be for your dog - outstanding reinforcement. Right. The different varied layers and varied powers of reinforcement. Your cognizant of the arousal state of the dog and putting them into the zone of peak performance before you ask the dog to do anything. You know, I've had people come up to me and say, "You know, my dog doesn't really like obedience, so I've had to stop training it."

00:16:31

It's not that your dog doesn't like obedience. It's that your dog doesn't like the way you've been taught to teach obedience. If you approach obedience from a different perspective, your dog would love obedience. My dogs love working in obedience. So, it's all about that program. Is it created in a way that brings obvious success?

00:16:53

All right. So, the structure of the program. Is the motivation built within each layer? You're not jumping layers. **Number three**, it depends on the consistency and the quality of the practice time. Now, if number two is in place that there's motivation built in those each layer, then you're going to want to train your dog. So, you're going to get quality practice because you're going to see obvious outcomes. You're going to see progression. You're going to see transformation. So, some people, when they don't have that clear plan that's got building blocks, they know they should be training their dog and they're just mucking about they're passing the time. They're not creating outcomes. They're not getting accomplishments. They're not leading to transformations.



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

00:17:37

So, every time you train your dog there's an obvious rehearsal of success because like any good actor, any good athlete, they know that rehearsal of success leads to successful performances. And that's where we can turn our loud noise into white noise. We're going to get the success that we want with our dogs. Is the environment an engaged one that encourages learning? And if yes, guess what? Back up to point number three, you're going to want to train more because the environment is engaged.

00:18:13

The instructor is knowledgeable. The instructor inspires you. The instructor challenges you. They question you in order to help clarify what you know. You're allowed to fail because the failure is within a boundary of confidence. So, you're, it's okay for you to fail. You understand that failure helps you to know what you didn't get or what you didn't understand.

00:18:38

For example, if I was to use my GPS and take me to Toronto 10 days in a row and on the 11th day, I had to find my own way. I wouldn't be able to, because I was never allowed to fail. I was lured every day. But if I was given instructions, I would learn, "Oh yeah, turn left at the fire station. Oh yeah. Turn right here."

00:18:56

And I would be learning as I was going. And I might turn the wrong way and go, "Wait a minute. This isn't the way I went before." Because I would be aware of what was I was doing. That's the difference between just luring a dog and actually allowing them to make good choices but putting them in an environment where it's safe for them to fail.

00:19:15

We want them to know that failure is just an opportunity to know that's not going to work. I got what's working next. So, **number four** is that environment of learning is engaged and it's safe. It's something that the dog is inspired to work. And you as a trainer is inspired to work as well.

00:19:34

Number five is that the training program you're in is a balance of success and challenge. Because success is habit forming. When you make a choice, there is a dopamine release. And that dopamine release makes you want to make more choices. When you get it wrong, guess what? No dopamine release but you get back to wanting it more dopamine release. You try again and try again.

00:19:58

So, failure is an inoculation against any distractions. When we create our dog's understanding this is right, do this not that. Like in ItsYerChoice, then we do, do this not that as in Crate Games. The door's open, but you shouldn't be flying out. Do this not that. It's helping to turn loud noise into white noise for the dog. And that is what's going to create their confidence and that is going to want them to learn more.

00:20:28

And that's when you know you have a dog who actually gets it. Because the program is set up for them to get it. I've always said our dogs are a reflection of our abilities to teach. And I absolutely believe our students are a reflection of our ability to teach.



00:20:46

So, if you are having success with your dog training that means you've probably got these five points dialed in. So, the program is structured for obvious success. There's motivation within the layers. There's consistency and the practicing and the quality of, and the time that you practice. The environment, the community of learning is, or if you're in a class, it's not an environment of drama, it's an environment of inspiration.

00:21:11

And there's a balance between being a successful and challenging. So, if you're teaching dog training, check that you've got these five dialed in. If you're training your dog, check that you've got those five dialed in. And if you don't check out [episode number 56](#). Because I've got a little hint to you in there, how you could learn more about our program.

00:21:38

Check out your own dogs. Is there too much loud noise in their life? You got to turn that loud noise into white noise and that's how your dog is going to be successful. Hey, leave me a comment. I would love to know what you think about this. And if you're watching this on YouTube, please subscribe to our podcast and click that little bell to get notified because not only am I going to have podcasts every week I'm also going to put in some extra videos to help you with your dog training. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

00:22:13

He thinks so too. He thinks the dog training is going to be swell. Okay.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 59: Why Your Treats Aren't Working for Your Dog](#)

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

[Crate Games Online](#)

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

[Video: How to Train Your Dog to Leave It with No Command](#)

[Home School the Dog](#)

[Recallers](#)

[Handling360](#)

[Blog: Distraction Work in Dog Training: A Conversation Between Friends](#)

[Vlog: Where Is Your Dog on the Circle of Fun?](#)

[Podcast Episode 56: 5 Simple Questions to Guide Your Dog Training](#)



Why Some Dogs Just Don't Get It

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.



Meet Us Online

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

