

Conversations with Uncontrollable and Untrainable Dogs

Speaker Key

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Transcript

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SG If you have followed me on my blog in the past, you've probably read that I believe dog training is like a [conversation with a friend](#). Challenges happen with that conversation when we don't like the answer that our friend is giving, and we end up trying to change the question. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog.

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Today we're doing a deep dive into the unconscious habit some of us have of trying to control the dog. I'm also going to share with you this quick and catchy acronym that I use to explain four questions that I ask myself constantly in my own dog training, that I asked my students to ask themselves in their dog training.

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But first, let's talk about that conversation. Let's say you ask your dog to sit. Now the only way that your dog can keep the conversation going is with his actions. Action of compliance or action of non-compliance. Now the conversation from our end has got to be one of curiosity from complete neutrality, meaning without judgment and we need to accept the answer our dog is giving us.

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But we can't. We end up trying to control the dog. So, we say, "sit, sit, Sit, Hey SIT." And that goes back to the old philosophy that we are the master, and he must listen. That dog must obey. We are dominant and it's their role in life to listen to us. Now, imagine if you had a boyfriend that treated you like that, how good would that relationship be?

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What if you had a co-worker that maybe was in a higher pay scale than you and treated you like that, how good would that relationship be? Or a spouse? You see relationships, whether they be with dogs, with siblings, with coworkers, with people who work for you, nothing changes. Our conversations need to be coming from a place of neutrality, without judgment, and with a great deal of curiosity and acceptance of the answers that we get.

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Because what if the dog that you have right now, that dog that may be causing you some frustration or angst, what if their role really was to help you understand the only thing any of us can control in life is our own choices and our own responses to other people's choices. So, imagine that conversation when you asked your dog to sit, and they don't understand.

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By us repeating, we are saying "Oh, I don't think he's picking up what I'm putting down here. I think he doesn't understand me. He can't hear me. I'm just going to repeat that one more time." "Hey, sit." And I'm going to get louder, "Hey Sit!". And I'm going to maybe puff myself up and "SIT!". Let's just stop and bask in the irony of that. We asked our dog to do something, they give us a response and we end up pretending we didn't hear their response, or we don't understand the response.



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Yet, what we tell people is that our dog doesn't understand our question, or they're not listening to us. I kind of think that's kind of funny. If you, like me, believe that our dogs are doing the best they can, with the education that we've given them in the environment that we're asking them to perform, then it can only come down to one of two reasons why they're not sitting.

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It's either the education we've given them or the environment we're asking them to do that sit in. Today, I want to focus on that education. And in dog training or in any kind of coaching in life, there's really two ways that we can go. We can educate and coach from a place of enrichment, engagement and reinforcement, or we can educate and coach from a place of blame, shame, and fear.

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And one brings out confidence, one deepens relationships. And I don't happen to believe the other does. So, if you, like me, want to train your dog from a [place of reinforcement](#) and engagement, then we, you and I, have to get fantastic about the use of reinforcement. And that is something that I have been studying for more than 25 years.

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How can I get better at how I use the reinforcement? And that comes down to the four questions that I'm going to share with you, but first my acronym, you ready for it? The four questions are defined by the acronym EGTT. It's kind of like catching yourself at a sneeze. EGTT. Now you could also use the acronym PLAY. I'll show you how you do that but truly, it's EGTT.

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So, the first question is "I want to **establish** what's a value for my dog". So, I'm going to be going at a place of curiosity. Now, dogs come pre-programmed that they like food and water. That's what's a value. But that value will be different depending on a lot of things.

So, let's say you were just playing Frisbee with your dog and it's super hot. Be careful about doing things like that, playing catch with your dog when it's super hot.

But your dogs' tongues hanging out of their mouth and you say, "Hey, how about some dried popcorn?" "No, thank you." Right then what's a value is a big bowl of water. Okay. So, the first question is I need to find out, evaluate, establish at this moment what's a value? You can't train unless you know what's a value. Now, our second is the G. And that is the G of the EGTT, the G is we need to now **grow** what's of value.

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And here's what happens guys. We got these four questions, but most people with their dogs, they skip questions two and three. They go one to four and that's what causes problems. So, when you have something, people might say, "Oh, my dog loves hot dogs. So, I know what's a value. I'm just going to give them hot dogs."

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Which by the way, I'm not a fan of, a lot of salt, a lot of nitrates, a lot of bad things in those. I mean I wouldn't eat a hot dog myself. Well, that's besides the point, but I never did. But there's a lot better treats for your dogs, right.

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You know what? I'm going to [put a link to a way you can get some recipes](#) that I use for making good training treats for my dog. Okay. I just threw a curve ball to my team who's going to be listening to this podcast.

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So, you need to grow that - because if you followed on [podcast episode number 59](#), where I explained we need to have many different things of many different values, because if we only use one thing, then we're asking a dog to say, "Oh, I get chicken wieners at home. Why would I listen to you when you're training with chicken wieners at the park where there's a lot of distractions?" So, we need to establish what's a value, and now we need to grow that.

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And we might grow it to some dried treats when we're at home in some really exciting, fresh roast beef or some treats like, liver pâté is a really go-to if you've got a picky eater, pick yourself up some liver pâté. That's super high value. But you need medium value. You need low value. So, you're going to grow things like growing the value of tugging a toy with you.

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So those are things that I'm constantly, at every stage of my training "what's a value now, are there more things I could be growing value with?". And that leads us to our third question. It's the T, so we've got the EGTT, the T is we need to think of **transferring** the value.

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And so often people who use lures in their training, they don't think of transferring the value. "Oh, my dog loves hotdogs. Look, he'll sit, he'll down, he'll prance by my side. He'll come." "Look, mommy's got a cookie." "He'll come every time." But the joke's on you because he won't come every time. Because the value stays with the wiener.

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Your dog will make a decision to choose the distraction over you and the wiener. Okay. So, we need to transfer the value. That's question number three. What should I be transferring the value to now? And it could be something as simple as transferring the value into something super important that could save your dog's life, their name.

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And the way you're going to do that is you're [never going to say their name](#) unless you know they're going to turn and look at you and you can reward them with something of great value.

So, we want to transfer the value to things like bringing you a toy, a retrieve. So, some people are okay with, I throw the toy and my dog grabs a toy and then just roams around and has fun by themselves.

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And then I'll walk out. That's a game of retrieve. But the humans retrieving that way. And then they might have another person retrieve where they throw the toy, the dog grabs a toy makes his way back, but then plays keep away from you. That's a different game of retrieve. You're both kind of getting equal exercise there.



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Their game of retrieve might be your dog runs out after their toy and they saunter back and then they drop it just about 10 feet away from you. Allowing them to get away from you before you throw it again. All right. It's a game retrieve, gives you a little more exercise again. And then you might have a game of retrieve for the dog reluctantly will bring the toy back and drop it, takes him a little longer.

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So, he might chomp on the toy. They might stop and throw it up in the air eventually, and the best way to have retrieve; the dog flies out as fast as they can and flies back to you as fast as they can. And what's the difference between all of those retrieves is how well you've transferred the value, that's it.

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It doesn't matter what breed of dog you have. It makes no difference whatsoever. It's all about the transfer of value. I'll give you an example. One of our [Recallers](#) students recently shared this awesome video, where she was looking through some old videos.

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And she said when she first started Recallers every time she'd get her dogs dinner ready, they'd get excited. And they'd grab a toy, and they'd start killing the toy. And maybe three of them would get tugging on it and they get over aroused and they'd start running around the house like maniacs until she them fed.

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And then she showed a video of them doing dinner now, and they're all just hanging out. You can see, they look completely chill. There's no anxiety, they're not barking and saying, "Hurry up mom, get my food on the table!" They're just chill. That's just a transfer of value.

And the cool thing is if you're listening to this, instead of watching this, which by the way, if you're watching this and you're liking it so far, go ahead and hit the like button for me.

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But if you're just listening to this, these are the three Dalmatians. And we start the story of Recallers with three adult Dalmatians living in complete chaos and anarchy because they're just running crazy all over the house. And the happy ending is she's just done a fantastic job and it's not like we're talking about a professional dog trainer, just a pet owner, like anybody listening to this.

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Okay. So, transfer value, super important. We want to transfer the value number one, to you. So that your dog sees you as more valuable than a wiener, more valuable than any distraction.

Then we want to transfer to things like retrieving, to things like staying calm on a bed while I'm preparing your dinner, to things like staying near me instead of lunging at dogs when we're walking down the street.

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So, any of you who have followed the [perch work video](#) where we're talking about getting your dog in reinforcement zone and using the perch, you're transferring value. And now we're going to our second T, the fourth letter in that quick and catchy acronym EGTT, and that is we're going to **test** the value.



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So, we're going to take our dog who we've been building value for Reinforcement Zone with all that perch work and we're going to go out to our front yard and see if our dog [can take one step](#) and get rewarded.

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But the challenge is what happens is people establish what's a value. "Oh, you like hot dogs. All right. We're using hot dogs for the rest of your life." And then they jump right through to testing the value, "we're going to go for a walk, and I want to see how much you liked the hot dog."

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"Can you stay by my side cause luring you to stay here." And that's where the conversation goes bad. And that's when people say "This reinforcement based dog training crap, it doesn't really work." "No, because my dogs are going to choose the deer over the wiener. So, it can't work." I'm here to tell you it can, and it does work. It works not just for my dogs and my dogs are as driven about chasing deer as anybody's.

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It works for anybody's dog who's willing to say "I want that conversation with my dog from a place of neutrality. I want to approach every conversation with my dog from a place of curiosity". So, we've got that quick and fancy, catchy acronym EGTT. Now, I did say if you need it, we can make it the acronym PLAY because let's face it, that's what dog training, really good effective dog training, is all about, playing with your dog.

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Okay. So, here's that fancy quick and catchy acronym with PLAY.

And it is:

Please establish value,
Lengthen or grow the value,
Actually transfer the value, and then,
You test the value.

PLAY, see how easy acronyms work? It's just a catchy phrase to help you remember those four questions, no matter what stage of training that you're at with your dog.

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I do it myself with my puppy. So, what's of value to her when she first came, when she first started. She's been here since day one. When I first started training with her, it was "Yeah I like different cookies. I like tugging with you. I like retrieving." You know, I transferred value and I created all these great things.

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But today, if we go outside and I asked her to tug and there's other dogs out there moving, the sheep herder in her she says, "No, no, no, no, no. That isn't of value. I cannot tug with you when my dog/sheep are moving." And so, what do I do? I'm a reinforcement-based trainer. Oh my gosh. How am I going to get my dog to answer the way I want?



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Remember what I said at the beginning, we can't control our dogs. We can't. There's an illusion that we can if we give them enough pain, we can't control them, but what we can do is control our choices.

And so, my choice is to constantly ask that question in a way that she has success. That she leads one step closer to her being able to tug when those dogs are loose.

And just this weekend, such a huge celebration, I was able to get her to tug when the dogs were running all around the building like crazy.

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That's a huge step. And that's what's going to lead me to testing the value outside and her saying, "Yes, the value is transferred to you and I love tugging with you anytime you want."

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It's no different than going up to a preschooler and saying, "What's the square root of 484?" and then going, "Uh, we haven't taken that in class yet." You don't then get louder. "No, no! What's the square root of 484?!" "What's the, what's the square root of—?!" You don't get angry at them. You believe them. That's what a conversation's like, somebody gives you a response, you believe the answer.

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But yet with our dogs, we call them untrainable or uncontrollable when they don't give us the answer that we want. Remember the only way our dogs can converse with us is by doing what we asked or not doing what we asked. Either way, you've got to believe them. And start looking at either the education you've given them or the environment that you are asking them to perform. It can get better. It will get better if you just believe and follow EGTT. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

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

[Podcast Episode 2: Reinforcement](#)

[Tasty Treats Recipes eBook](#)

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

[Blog Post: A GAME to Preserve Your Dog's Recall Cue](#)

[Recallers](#)

[YouTube Video: Susan Garrett's Perch Work Dog Tricks \(Pivots and Spins\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 73: Why Your Dog Is Still Pulling on Leash and How to Fix It](#)



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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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