

Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:10

SG Success in dog training acquires you to take consistent action. But let's face it, you're not going to take consistent action if you're frustrated and overwhelmed and really not a hundred percent sure you're doing the right thing. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today I'm going to give you a strategy to help you take consistent action.

00:00:35

But first, I want to start with something I haven't done in a really long time. And that is read some of your reviews that you've left on this podcast. And thank you so much to each of you who are leaving reviews. The first one is from the Funkybec in Australia.

00:00:52

She writes, "Lessons in more than just dog training. If everyone who owns a dog listens to Susan's wisdom, there would be far fewer rescue dogs and more compassion in the world. I love this podcast and wait impatiently for each episode. Susan's methods are far more than dog training. They are about compassion, clarity, and understanding. Something we could all use more of in our lives."

00:01:13

Thank you, Funkybec. That's awesome. And I think you're going to like today's. The next one is from Ninjama25, who writes, "Oh my gosh, I'm addicted. Love this podcast. Brilliant. I'm learning tips and philosophies that are changing how I coach clients and how I work with my foster dogs. Thank you, Susan."

00:01:32

And thank you, Ninjama25. I hope I'm saying your name right. This one is from TeeyaMareeya. You guys have got the greatest handles; I got to tell you. "Some great tips here. Thanks so much. I could listen to your podcast all day. They're absolutely my favorite. I love your passion and your way of explaining things. You do it in such a way where you educate but don't patronize. It feels like having a conversation with a friend. Thanks for being a friend through lockdown."

00:01:58

Thank you, Teeya. And I appreciate this feedback because that's exactly what I'm going for. That's the vibe. I want to have a conversation with friends when I have a podcast. When I'm looking at the lens, when we're recording this, when I'm speaking into the microphone, I'm just thinking of talking to a friend.

00:02:14

And another great handle, Ionica Mermaid, "Just wanted to say thank you for all the content you're putting out there. And that I am amazed how much you motivate me. I got to know you through YouTube this year and started Home School the Dog, because I wasn't sure if Recallers was worth spending so much money on." Okay, it's honest. "But now that I have it," She actually is a Recaller. "I know it was worth every penny, and I might even renew it next year as there's so much breathtakingly awesome content. I'm really grateful to have found you, your content, and not to forget your team."



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

00:02:48

I just love shout-outs to the team because, you know what, I have got a fabulous team behind me. So, thank you, Ionica Mermaid, who finishes by saying, "My dogs and I have improved in less than two weeks more than in the last several months. Can't wait to see more." Thank you for leaving these reviews. I read each and every one of them. And we share them as a team. We actually share them in our slack channel.

00:03:11

That's our technology for talking to each other. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's fix some challenges in dog training today. Now I'm going to start this with a story. I was out cycling today with my family. So, two of my brothers and my one sister; we went cycling on the trails. Now here in Southern Ontario, we used to have a lot of electronic trains and obviously, when the diesels came in the electronic trains went out and they took out the electronic train tracks, and they put in these amazing cycling trails.

00:03:42

So, we have the radial trails and the rail trails that go all through Southern Ontario. You don't need to know all that, but it's fun. Wherever the trail intersects with a road, no matter how minor, there will be a big gate across the trail. Now, this, I'm assuming, is to prevent any kind of motorized vehicles from going on the trail. But there's two small pillars off to the side, big enough for one cyclist to get through and maybe a few inches to spare on either side.

00:04:13

If you are listening to this podcast, I'll put some actual video of what I shot on the trail today. So, you get a real image of what this looks like. Now I had this epiphany about dog training out on the trails today. Because I watched people go through these gates, these big metal gates, and many people would slow down almost to a stop.

00:04:34

And then they would have to accelerate through it again. And I've seen my friends do this over and over. Now they don't come to a stop, but they really slow down. And all along, I've thought, "Well, it's the fear of hitting one of these pillars" they're metal. They're in the ground. They're going to hurt if you hit one.

00:04:50

And I always assumed that people slow down to almost a stop because they didn't want to get hurt. They didn't want to hit these uprights. I believe what actually is going on is people are putting too much focus on the uprights and not enough focus on the path. Now I just wheeled through these uprights, and it's not that I'm not afraid of getting hurt. I don't want to get hurt.

00:05:15

But I know that if I'm traveling on the path with a big open area, my wheels don't really move that far. So why all of a sudden going through a gate would they suddenly start, you know, randomly going two feet, one direction or another causing me to get into trouble and possibly hit an upright. They won't. I focus on the path. I don't focus on the obstacles. The things that might hurt me.



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

00:05:43

And my big epiphany was, I think that's potentially what's causing people a lot of challenges in dog training. Whether you have a brand-new puppy, or you have a rescue dog, or even in your own dog. You get wrapped up in focusing on the things that you don't like. And that doesn't give you the opportunity to focus as much on what you want.

00:06:06

And the other thing is it changes your emotional state. I'm going to share with you this quote. So, we've gone from bicycles. We're going to basketball now. Now for those of you who aren't basketball fans, I'm a massive basketball fan. We are now in the midst of a best of seven series to crown the new NBA world champion. And the two teams involved, the Phoenix Suns, who I'm secretly rooting for, but that's another story.

00:06:31

And the Milwaukee Bucks, who I'm still a fan of. So, it's win-win for whoever wins. Now, they've played five games in this series. After the fourth game, the leading scorer from the Milwaukee Bucks, he's a fellow from Greece by the name of Giannis Antetokounmpo.

00:06:48

Now I admire this man because he's a phenomenal basketball player, but I think he's also a great human being for a number of reasons. I kind of wished he played for my Raptors, but that's another story. So, Giannis has scored 40 points a game, almost every game in the playoffs. And somebody was interviewing him after the last game.

00:07:11

And they said, "Hey, you must really get excited about all these points you're scoring and how easy it is for you to score." He had the most gracious answer and I really believe this is going to help dog owners to focus where they need to focus. And what he said was, "If I focus on all the points I scored in the past, that's my ego speaking. That's me being boastful. That's me just thinking about how great I am. And if I think about how many points I might score in the future, that's my pride. That's me getting built up about myself. And so, what I do is focus on the present, and that puts me in a place of humility which allows me to be the best I can be and have fun at a job that I love."

00:08:02

And so, I thought of this immediately, and I mean, I didn't want to do a podcast just on that little thing, but it fits so well with what I want to talk about today because it's so easy to allow ego to come into dog training. Why isn't this puppy as good as my last puppy? And why can't he just get this?

00:08:23

And what happens is its ego speaking. "It can't be me. I'm a great dog trainer. My last dog was amazing. It must be this dog. He must be stupid or something." And what it does is it changes our emotional state. It puts us into a place of being disappointed. And disappointment is not a great basis to have an amazing relationship.

00:08:46

And at the end of the day, whether your dog is trained to the maximum potential he could be or not, having the greatest relationship possible is really the most important thing.



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

00:08:59

So, ego gets in the way, and when you feel triggered, ask yourself, “is this ego thinking?”, “am I comparing my dog to a dog I used to have?”, “am I comparing my dog to some imaginary standard that I think that this dog should be achieving?”

00:09:16

Now, if you're focused on the future, what's happening is maybe you have a training goal, “I need this puppy house trained before I go back to work.” “I need this dog's agility skills done so I can enter the national championship.” My version of who this dog needs to be in this timeframe will tend to have you make poor dog training decisions. You'll be making decisions about outcomes you believe you have to have.

00:09:44

And you might approach your training more frantic. You definitely will be more inclined to take shortcuts in the training just to get outcomes. So, like Giannis Antetokounmpo, I really would love for you to focus on the present. One of my favorite words is the word “surrender.” And I've mentioned this on the podcast before you think surrender is something of weakness, somebody on a battlefield waving a white flag. “Oh. They gave up. They're losers.”

00:10:16

I think of surrender as a place of strength. That I'm surrendering to any outcomes whenever they happen, but it allows me to come from a place of great humility and focus on “what does this dog need from me now.” Here's the behaviors that I don't want. These are the obstacles. ‘My puppy is peeing and pooping on the floor.’ ‘My puppy is nipping at my kids.’ ‘My puppy is destroying my furniture; my puppy doesn't listen or pulls or is reactive towards other dogs.’

00:10:55

Whatever you don't want, those are your obstacles. And the more you focus on them; it's your ego getting mad at ‘why isn't this fixed?’. Trust me when I say it's going to get further away. It's going to take you even longer to get there when you're focusing on ego; from a place of ego, there's a great quote I found when I was listening to a podcast.

00:11:18

I'm going in random directions here on today's podcast. I was listening to a podcast, a business podcast, actually. Her name is Alexandra Horwitz. She studied human cognitive ability, and then she transferred to dogs.

00:11:40

And she had this great quote that I'm like, “Yeah! You get it!” And her quote was, “When you are dog training, and you're doing it right, it will literally change you.” And that's what I'm talking about. It changes you from being emotional and ego-driven to being humble and present and giving yourself grace for things that you may have done that weren't correct. And it's giving the dog grace by meeting the dog where they are and just observing them from a place of complete neutrality. What do you need now? What is the best thing I can do right now?



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

00:12:22

And, you know, I can't say this often enough, every interaction with our dogs is a conversation, and every conversation with people is a relationship building or a relationship tearing down event. So, every time we interact with our dog, you might not think you're training, but every interaction is training. Every moment of training is our conversation, is a daily conversation with our dogs. It's an opportunity for connection, for growth, and for trusting confidence to grow.

00:12:55

And when you do it right, it literally will change you. Absolutely it will change you. And so, what are those things that you can focus on? I'm going to give you five things that if you have a new puppy or a rescue dog, and three of them really apply to all dogs. But if you're frustrated or you're overwhelmed, focus on the present, and these are the five things.

00:13:16

Number one, [daily exercise](#). Now, if you have a puppy that would be age-appropriate, of course, little wee puppies, we're not taking them out on 15-mile hikes. So, exercise, fresh air, letting them get out there and, you know, smell and frolic and just have a great time. Daily exercise is huge. Number two, [engaging strategic games](#) that create behavior change in your dog.

00:13:47

And of course, I'm talking things like our Recallers program, Home School the Dog, our training is changing behaviors which changes who the dog is, and it's changing the people because you can't help but when you're having a great fun game with a dog and then you see outcomes like the dog is actually becoming more of who you want, it's changing you.

00:14:12

As Alexandra Horwitz said, "When you do it right, it changes you." So, we've got age-appropriate exercise, we've got engaging strategic games is number two. Number three, puppies need downtime. And they need downtime in confinement. Now you may have to grow this. So, the first puppy I've ever had, my youngest puppy, This!, who is now getting close to being a year old.

00:14:38

When she was a puppy, I had to grow her confinement time strategically because she whined a lot. There was some anxiety. Whining is anxiety, barking well, barking can be a number of things, but you know, depending on what you've done, you may have created it. But it's a sign of anxiety. And so, with This! I had to grow her time in confinement till the point where she was okay with it.

00:15:03

We're doing our dogs a favor because we're going to have to go to the grocery store at one point; they have to be left alone. So, it's a trifecta here. Number three is downtime, confinement downtime alone. Puppies need to nap. So many puppies get in trouble when people don't give them downtime to nap. And they're too young to self-regulate. Like my dogs now, they'll just sleep for hours on end anywhere. If I'm in the middle of teaching, they're just out. But puppies won't do that on their own. Not many of them anyway. And so, exercise, training, back outside to have a peer or a poop, and then downtime. I need you to [go in an ex-pen or a crate to nap](#).



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

00:15:46

And so, the trifecta is they get their rest, they learn to be comfortable with being in confinement, and they learn they don't always have to be next to you. So important to grow that confidence in the puppy that they're fine when you have to go out without them. And it starts with just getting that routine in order. We've done some training; we've done a little exercise, and then we have some downtime.

00:16:16

Number four on the list is socializing, with people, with new environments, socializing with puppies, with all sorts of things. So, socializing is super important. Number five is enrichment, and this really needs to be a podcast on its own, puppy enrichment. Because people have the wrong idea of what puppy enrichment is.

00:16:37

But, you know, puppy enrichment is maybe some brain games for the puppy. Maybe some smells for the puppy to scent out. Puppy enrichment is not giving your puppy a stuffed Kong. In my books, that's just a different feeding bustle. That's all it is. So, we've got the obstacles. And it doesn't matter if you don't have a puppy.

00:16:58

What are the obstacles for your training? Maybe it's the obstacles of trying to be a more reinforcement-based dog trainer. That, "Oh Susan, that requires a lot of time. I don't know what to do." If you don't know what to do, just check out these podcasts. We're getting really close to having a hundred podcasts here, and I make every single one of them a little master class for you because I want to help you.

00:17:22

Do something. Take action. [Stop focusing on the obstacles](#) and start focusing on the path. Because when you focus on the path, things happen faster. You don't have to slow down. Things start to accelerate. You start to get results. The outcomes happen for you without you being the one to push for them. They organically just appear for you.

00:17:46

Focus on what you can do. Sure, acknowledge the things that are troubling you, but focus on what you can do and then ask yourself, "what does this puppy or what does this dog need from me today?" You know what, your brain knows. It'll give you an answer. Trust me on this. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 32: 20 Easy Ways to Exercise Your Dog at Home](#)

[Podcast Episode 68: 3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know](#)

[Podcast Episode 70: Critical Info for Your Puppy's First Day and Night at Home](#)

[Podcast Episode 67: Are You Stressing About Your Dog's Stress?](#)



Overwhelm in Dog Training: How to Take Action on Challenges

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>

