

Episode: #104

Naughty Dog Behaviors And How To Deal With Them

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Every once in a while, we're going to come upon a time when our dog does the complete opposite of what we expect. Then you're trying to behave all positive and everything but holy crap all you want is for your dog to stop. What can you do? That's the question that's coming today. I've got 10 different examples of things that your dogs are doing that you would like to know what to do when you're trying to behave in a way that's becoming of somebody who's trying to be a reinforcement-based dog trainer.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Now, if you've been following our program, you know that there's three things that we can do in response to what our dogs are doing. Number one, we can ignore the behavior - like tolerate it hope it's going to get better. That's rarely, rarely a good plan. You know in some incidences possibly but not very often.

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The other thing we can do is manage. That is, we could put the garbage up on the counter, so our dog doesn't get into the garbage when we go out for the night. That's managing. Or yay, we can dog train it. That involves having a plan and executing that plan.

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Where does the plan come from? Well, ideally it comes from a dog training expert like myself. A mentor that you look up to that you go, "Holy crap! Her dogs are really well behaved." And in addition to that, "Holy crap. Look at all of her students' dogs, they're really well behave too." That's what I want. That's where you get your plan.

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Okay. So, there's three things you can do. You can ignore it, manage it, train it. Now in order to train it, you're going to have to manage the situation. And that's what this is - a lot of times it's about, it's about mismanagement or just ignoring it and hoping it's going to get better. But let's dig a little deeper because there's some layers to this.

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First of all, I'm going to ask the question - whatever's going on with your dog - is it obviously stress-related? Because if it is, you can't do anything because the dog is not thinking. They are reacting and all you can do is create an environment that looks safe for the dog. Open a car door, you know, open a crate door, throw down— they're not going to eat cookies, but create an environment that looks like you are a safe haven. Run away from the dog so that you can create something that they may want to run towards. Right.

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Think of a dog who's terrified of thunder and they're out in the middle of a field. They're just going to panic and run in any direction and they're not even thinking. Okay. So, if it's obviously stress-related none of what I'm going to say to you is going to be relevant.



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All that's relevant is trying to create safety for that dog at that moment. Okay. So, what we've got is what appears to be dogs behaving badly, but let's think of this in terms of like kids, adolescents growing up, they want two things.

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They want belonging and community and they want reinforcement. And they can get that into general directions. Maybe by hanging out in gangs and getting into trouble or by being guided in a constructive belonging and seeking reinforcement by maybe joining some community teams. Joining a basketball team, a baseball team, getting reinforcement and acknowledgement and belonging that way.

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All right. So, what our dogs are doing, they're sometimes just looking for reinforcement, occasionally belonging, and we've got to provide that in an obvious, constructive way for them. So, you got your behavior and maybe you've got a few in your brain. Now, "what do I do when my dog does this Susan?" So, think of the one or two or three behaviors that your dog's got going on.

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Now, if it happens once a year, let me just tell you that frequency is normal. If it's happening once a month, let me suggest you need to seek out a good mentor to help you with that problem. If it's happening once a week, then you've either got to examine your execution of your mentor's plan, or you got to get a different mentor.

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Right. So, examine how often it's happening and then decide to take action. So, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Number one, 'can you stop or redirect the reinforcement that the dog is getting right now for the behavior that they're doing?' For example, question number seven on my list. "What do I do when my dog digs up the water bowl?"

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Okay, so you can, you have the ability to stop and redirect that reinforcement right now. All they have to do is pick up the water bowl, right? It stops the behavior. It doesn't change the dog's desire to dig in the water bowl. You've got to then ask yourself the next question, 'where's the value for the dog?'

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Well, it must be fun splashing water all over the place. And so, what you're going to have to do is teach the dog an incompatible behavior when there's water down or when they're at this stage of their life, just pick up the water and manage it. Put it down several times a day for the dog to have a drink and then pick it up.

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This is something they may outgrow, but they will not outgrow it if they continuously have access to that water bowl. So that's an easy one. Can you stop redirect the behavior and where's the value, and the next question is 'what's your plan?' What's your plan, sit down and think about what's your plan. Do you want to write out a plan, how to teach your dog to ignore water bowls? Or do you just want to manage that until that dog grows up a little bit? And guess what, 99% of the time they just stop wanting to dig in water bowls. Okay. So that is the first question. Can you stop interrupt or redirect the behavior?



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If the answer is yes, then do it and then come up with a plan. If the answer is no, then I would like you to think of three categories that I've created to put behaviors into. The first one is just in the flow of dog training, in the flow of everyday life. So, a question like number nine here might be in the flow of dog training or everyday life. "What do I do when everyone who knows my dog's name says it over and over and I want to use it for a recall?" Okay. This probably could be category number one.

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Right. You could stop or redirect the reinforcement. In this case it's not the dog's, it's the people that you can stop or redirect. Can you control everybody? No, but what you can do is [come up with a nickname for your dog](#), something only you know, and you won't tell those other people. You build value for that - boom shakalaka boom - your dog just listens to you and ignores the rest of them.

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Okay. So those are easy ones. So, behaviors that are in the flow of training or everyday life, the subsection of this, is it the dog on leash or are they off leash? If they're on leash it's easy that you can just turn towards a dog, get them out of the environment, or you can go back and start your behavior again.

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That is like question number four. "What do I do when my dog breaks position for a stay in obedience?" You're going to stop, ask yourself that number one question where's the value. Where's the value for the dog? Clearly it isn't in holding position. So, dogs are always doing the best they can with the education you've given them in the environment that we're asking them to perform.

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If they aren't holding that stay either the education is incomplete, even though you may think it is, the dog's the one who's in charge of the learning, right? They're the one who's telling you what their responses. That education is incomplete or it's just incomplete in the environment that you've put them in today.

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So, all that I do when my dog breaks this day is a just walk back, I might turn them in a circle, put them back in the position and I'll go back and make that test again. [Was it the duration? Was it the distance? Was it the distraction](#) that I gave them? I'll give them the same test if they fail again, they're giving me a very clear signal. "You better go back and make a better plan for my education because it's a little incomplete right now."

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All right. So, if they're on leash, it's easy. If they're off leash, then there's a list, a checklist that I might go down. If it's in the flow of training or everyday life and they're off leash, chances are it's not a what I call a code red.

So, the first one is family life, code red is this is danger. We need something done immediately. It might not be like immediately life or death, but it could be like danger this is about to embarrass me in front of my entire in-laws or my sister's wedding is going to get ruined because the dog just ran off and was running towards the chocolate cake.



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Save the chocolate cake. Okay. So, code red is 'I need this stopped immediately'. In the flow of training is this something that you want to take note of. And the other is that third category I call it 'that's a little bit of fun for the dog'. And you know what, it's not obvious which category any behavior belongs in.

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Some of these are obvious. Some of them not so obvious, but then you go through the checklist of what your options are. So, your options I said you can, you know, can you redirect the behavior? Maybe, maybe not. Next is, can you engage the dog? So, for example, what do I do when my dog gets the zoomies in class? Can you redirect the dog?

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"Lie down. Come here. Sit." Can you redirect the dog? Now, remember if this is happening once a year, no big deal. It's normal. Something went on. If it's happening once a month, you need some help. If it's happening once a week, you need some different help. Okay. So can you redirect. This is the checklist you're going through.

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Can you redirect? No. Can you engage the dog by asking them— engagement might be asking them to do a behavior, engagement might be like in [episode number 22](#), where my husband used the invisible bubble of pressure and made a shrill noise and ran the opposite way when our puppy got loose, when we were on vacation, and she just turned and chased him. That was him engaging her.

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So, can you engage your dog to get them to come back to you in a fun way? Sometimes like lying on this, like collapsing on the floor, laughing or rolling around, or just being something that the dogs going "I was running off here, but like, what are you doing? Okay. You're embarrassing me in front of my friends. Can you get off the floor now?"

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So, engagement might be just you acting goofy or doing something like when I go to workout in the mornings and I start rolling, everybody wants to jump on my head. I don't know. It's crazy. Like, you know, it's something about that is really engaging to dogs. So, can you engage them?

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Number two, can you bribe them? "Hey mama got a cookie." Susan Garrett saying bribe them. Oh, heck yes. But that's reinforcing the dog for what they're doing. Oh, heck yes. We're trying to stop something and then we're going to come up with a plan, so it never happens again, right? So, bribing them this one time. Remember it's only gonna happen once a year. Bribing them this one time, I'm okay with that because we need to stop the behavior.

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So, can you engage them? Can you bribe them? And it might be like throwing cookies on the floor. It might be squeaking a squeaky. It might be slamming a toy that they like, you know, bribery takes different forms. Now the next one is, can you ignore them? Now you're not going to do this if the behavior the dog is doing is dangerous or it's getting reinforcement for it.



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For example, if your dog— you're in the backyard and you say, “come on, it's time to go in” and your dog just starts like play bowing and running circles and going, “no, I'm not going in.” You could just sit down in the chair and open your book again. I'm ignoring you. Like I don't really have to go in, but I'm not going to say anything to you to reinforce this behavior. I'm reading a book or pretending to read a book, but what I'm really doing is I'm planning to listen to a few more [episodes of Shaped by Dog](#) and figure out what my next move is here. That's what I'm doing.

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All right. I've got to come up with a better plan because anytime your dog does something you don't like, you've got to say, where's the value and what did I learn from this? What's my next plan? All right. So, ignoring the behavior only if it's not being reinforced by doing it. For example, I was in a class one time, and it was an obedience class.

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And think about this. Typically, obedience classes happen after supper. So, this woman rushes home from work, grab something, wolf's down dinner, runs out to class and she's waiting to go into the next class. Meanwhile, there's another class and they're doing retreats and her dog is barking outside the ring, “ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff” at the dogs as they're running back and forth retrieving, and she's turning her back.

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And I said, “What are you doing?” She said, “Oh I'm ignoring the behavior.” I said, “It's a border Collie.” Their reinforcement is I get to bark and lunge at dogs as they're retrieving. It's getting reinforcement. It doesn't have— because reinforcement can come from the environment, it's just as good reinforcement, right? Doesn't always have to come from you. Sometimes the better reinforcement comes from the environment.

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And when I say the environment, it could be family members. It could be a squirrel that's running. It could be shredding the couch, the couch could give reinforcement. It could be knocking over the garbage. The garbage gives reinforcement. Anything that doesn't come from you I'm calling it the environment.

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All right. So, ignoring the behavior might be an option. So, we've got, can you stop or redirect? Can you engage? Can you bribe? And can you ignore? Now we're getting into the serious stuff. Can you surprise the dog? So surprising the dog might be making a goofy noise. It might be this, I've done this one time. I took a troll comforter off of my couch. And as my puppy ran by, I just threw it on the puppy because the puppy was running around with something that she could damage. I honestly don't remember what it was. Piece of jewelry or something. Yeah, my bad.

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And so, I just threw that, and it surprised her, and she stopped running. “Well, yeah. I just got tangled up in my throw blanket.” All right. So, can you surprise them? That's one thing. Another way to surprise is like clapping your hands or making a loud noise. Surprising like startling them saying like, “Hey!” something that is out of the norm for the dog, right?



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Whistling. My whistle startles a lot of dogs. I'm not, I'm going to save your ears. I am not going to whistle into this microphone but think of like a packed hundred-thousand-person stadium and a college football game is going on, you will hear my whistle above everybody else's. It's that good. So, I can startle, right, to stop the behavior. I'm going to do all those other things first.

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Generally, one of those will happen and I'll dealt through all those other ones in a matter of a minute or so. Now, if it's a code red, I'm not going through any, it's unlikely I'm going to any of the others. If the dog is heading towards danger, I may try the engagement of shrill noise, run the opposite direction, but then I'll go into surprise startle scare.

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Scare would be like, you know, screaming. I, as a last resort, because sometimes screaming will cause the dog to go in the opposite direction. Right. But we are code red. We have a dog who is in danger, and we need to help them. Right. But you've got to ask yourself, how did you get in that situation to begin with?

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You put too much faith in what you thought was your dog's natural affinity to do what you want. And, you know, dogs are going to drift towards what's reinforcing. It's up to us as their protector and owner and you know leader to set up the reinforcement for them. So, they will look towards you for everything in anything.

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My puppy will be a year old in two days, and I would be willing to bet a good sum of money there is nothing I couldn't call her away from - that she would come to me and more often than not, she would come to me just with one call and it doesn't matter how far away she is. I wouldn't really have to raise my voice very much to get her to come to me.

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So, a normal "This!", she's going to come running. All right. So why do I have that? Because it was important to me. All right. So, knowing we've got our code red, our bit of fun, in the flow of training and family, those are our three categories of behaviors other than stress. So, you could categorize what you've got, look at is it on leash or off, and then go through here's what you're going to do to stop them.

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So, if you have chasing wildlife, well to me that's a code red. You shouldn't be scaring wildlife. Now, if the wildlife has got a good head start and it's a safe environment, I might ignore the dog and go back into the house. I've done that with Tater Salad. And then while I'm in the house, I'm planning how for this to never happen again. And I would say it's probably been, Tater has been with us for about two and a half years. It's been close to a year since he's ever [left me on a walk to go and chase wildlife](#).

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All right. So, it can be reversed. Absolutely it can be reversed. So, I want my dog to come in from the backyard because I have to go to work. Well, your bad. Right. So, number one thought is where's the value? Well, if they're running around the backyard, there's really not much you can do.



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Go through my list. Can you engage them? Can you bribe them? Can you, you can't ignore them because they might be having fun in the backyard plus you've got to get to work. Can you surprise them or startle them like— And then you've got to have a plan for this never to happen again. You've got to have a way, like I said, I live here on 28 acres and my puppy can be the furthest corner of our property and I call her, and she will come flying on one call.

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Right. So, you've got to have a plan to get that kind of reliability, or you should be managing behavior, not trusting that your dog naturally will want to remember. Just like teenagers, they're naturally going to gravitate to reinforcement, whether it be gang related or structured really constructive reinforcement like playing basketball. So, our dogs will do the same thing. They're just going to gravitate towards reinforcement, to us reinforcing it. It's up to us to make sure we funnel it in a direction we want.

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Okay. So, my dog has the kids' toys and they're playing keep away, that's family manners, bit of fun. And I would just scroll through those lists as I said, what do I do when my dog won't get into the car when I want to go to the park, I would say that would be the flow of training. It could be either. If it's in a dangerous environment, it really could be code red, but I would say your dog's telling you where the value is.

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And so, you need to make a routine habit, a building value for getting into car. You get to the park, you release them, you call them back, you put them back in the car, you give them a high value reward, you let them out again. Maybe two or three times before you really want to go home, you put them back in the car, give them high value rewards, say, "Hey, go play some more." Don't always make getting in the car being the end of all that is fun.

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Right. Keep them guessing, right? Just like your love life. Okay. "My dog goes crazy when I'm working my older dog." So go to [episode number 88](#), barrier frustration. And when I'm raising a puppy, my number one focus, well obviously it is recall, but my really big focus is I want my dogs to be [comfortable and quiet when I'm training other dogs](#). So, I put a lot of work into that. It requires a lot of patience, or you manage it.

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I don't like a young dog barking when I'm training another dog, so I don't allow them to rehearse that. And why they're doing it is probably barrier frustration. And number 10, "I've got a nine-month-old Husky, one trainer— who bites, who still puppy bites. One trainer told us to whack them on the nose that made it worse. Another one said yelp and say that hurts. That made it worse."

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"Now he's practically an adult and he's still biting, especially when it's bedtime and he's tired and cranky. So, what's a safe way to get them under control?" First of all, let me just say, I've got a [YouTube series on puppy biting](#) and how to stop it. And I will tell you that avoiding a dog getting cranky is a big part of it, but I believe my puppies really don't get into a bitey stage because I use the game of tug to teach where it's appropriate to bite and when it's appropriate to bite and when you should let go.





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So, check out on our YouTube page. I'll put [the link](#) in the show notes. The whole series on why your puppy is biting, what you should and shouldn't be doing about it. Okay. So hopefully now I've given you the tools that you can look at what you've got, how to categorize it, how to look for where the value, how to come up with a different plan and how to know if their frequency is appropriate or you need to go in a different direction.

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That's it for me. I'll see you next time on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

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

[Blog Post: The 3D Model for Dog Training: Duration, Distance, Distraction](#)

[Podcast Episode 22: The Invisible Bubble of Pressure and Your Dog](#)

[Shaped By Dog Podcast: All Episodes](#)

[Video Blog: Talking About Ruff Love \(Tater and Chipmunks\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 88: Barrier Frustration: Help for Fence Fighting, Leash Reactivity and Window Guarding](#)

[Blog Post: Bark, Lunge, Spin or Wait, Watch, Work?](#)

[Puppy Biting Playlist on YouTube](#)



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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