

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG The rhythm you have with the dog in your life is a reflection of the connectedness that you have with that dog. And the connectedness is defined by the moments when things don't go the way you really wanted them to. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. In my [last episode](#) of Shaped by Dog I said if you were interested in me doing a more of a deep dive on what I define as the rhythm of life with a dog leave me a comment. And lo and behold, many of you did.

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And so, let's get into this. When you think of rhythm you think of like Drake or Mozart, or Dua Lipa or Ed Sheeran or some musician, right? There's a rhythm to music and some melodic music is, has got a very peaceful, easy, rhythm, think some real grunge music has got this screaming, chaotic rhythm. It's still rhythm.

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And throughout our life there's a rhythm. There's a rhythm to the relationships that we share. It's like an ebb and flow to the people in your life. What is that rhythm of that relationship? And as I mentioned, I believe the rhythm is a reflection of the connectedness and the connectedness you know, it isn't how connected we feel to that person. But that connectedness really is defined by what happens in those moments when things don't go well. What you expected didn't happen. Just let that sink in for a little while and think about the people in your life. What happens when things don't go well?

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If you lead a team, what happens when something breaks? If you're a parent, what happens when you are massively disappointed by something your child did? If you own a dog which chances you do or you're thinking of getting one because that's why you're listening to this podcast. What happens during those moments? Because that is what defines the rhythm.

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Now you think about walking, there's a rhythm to walking. There's a rhythm to running. Yes, there's a rhythm for many people to dancing – and for others there's a very awkward rhythm to dancing. So, there's a rhythm to every conversation you have. And you've heard me say many times on this podcast that dog training really is just a conversation with our dogs. So, what is this rhythm? For me, it starts with a puppy.

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You could have rhythm all on your own as a human being and likewise all puppies have their own unique rhythm. And it's a reflection of their energy a lot of times. And it can be a real nervous energy that creates this rather frantic rhythm to their way of going. And the key is you don't want to mirror that back to them. You want to be the counter to that. And that's what creates the teamwork, the connectedness. The rhythm together is that one of you is a grounded person and it's highly unlikely it's going to be that young puppy. So when I'm working with that young puppy, the rhythm to my work is something that is bringing out confidence in that dog.



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Therefore, I'm very conscientious that there's a steady rhythm to our training sessions. Which means a training session with a puppy is going to be very, very short. Because I don't want any gaps because that's when the rhythm will be lost. And the puppy will go off and do something else right? Now, the rhythm to my life with that puppy also includes some flat times.

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Sometimes when they need to learn time away from me, they need to learn their own unique rhythm. They need to learn how to settle, how to relax, how to go about life when there isn't somebody there to entertain. What happens then? Does that nervous energy get taken out on a couch or is it the rhythm of the life that they've had up to that point with me has exhausted them so that they peacefully sleep, they wake up, they go about their party of one in their ex-pen or their crate. All of this is really dependent upon all the things that happened before.

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And even with a puppy, it goes back to what happens when things don't go the way I as the owner of that puppy expected them to. So is there a moment where I lose it and I yell, or I blame, I punish, I make the dog or the puppy give up what they want or give into me because I'm stronger, I'm smarter, I'm more powerful. The moments when things don't go the way you really wanted to that is the start of the storybook of your connectedness.

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Connection isn't about when you're firing all on the same cylinder. Connection, it just like you know, a chain is only as strong as the weakest link. So, the moments when things aren't going as you wanted, what is your response to that?

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You're going to lose your rhythm. It's because it's unexpected. But that loss might only be a millisecond as you recover. You see what's going on. You recognize our puppies, our dogs are people in our lives. 'They're doing the best they can with the education they've been given in the environment that they're currently in.'

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Yes, we could get some unexpected results, but that doesn't mean we have to look for somebody or something to blame. We can get curious, "Oh man, why did that work out that way? Is there something I could have done differently or is this just like a freak accident?" So, if it's a freak accident, nothing's going to change. If it was something I could've done differently, could I have manipulated the environment differently? Could I have changed what happened leading up to that thing? But I always look back on me when things don't go well.

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It's just so darn easy to look in the other direction. It's a lot less work, right? "Well, whoa. That had nothing to do with me." But that will change your connectedness to that person or that dog, which in turn changes the rhythm. It may not change it with one incident, but that creates a pattern. That creates a historical event in the mind of that dog or that other person. And it has a way of altering the rhythm you have with that person or dog. It has a way of altering your relationship.



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And so, if you think about a dog, there's a rhythm to the way you pat a dog. So, I noticed that people who really aren't familiar with dogs when they come to my house, they pat the dog like I don't know, like they're trying to butter a piece of bread or a piece of toast. They're like these quick little pats, that's weird to the dog. Most dogs will move away from that kind of energy.

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So, what brought this to my mind? I had somebody here, relatively new dog owner, they had their young dog in for a visit. They were talking to the dog. They were very stiff in their body posture, and they were saying "Rover sit. Sit Rover, sit Rover." And then it was accompanied with this stiff arm, like they bent their elbow very, very stiff and brought their whole hand up towards their face. "Sit, sit Rover. You sit, sit Rover." Finally, after about five or six of these repeated hand motions and a very strong intonation on the 't' "sit", Rover finally sat.

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And then the progression then went to "Stay. You stay, stay Rover. Stay, you stay." What's the rhythm of that conversation? It's very staccato. It's very one-sided, it's very harsh. Because rhythm involves emotion. It involves canter. It envelops the trust and the belief and the confidence and the acceptance. All of that goes into the rhythm. And I may be talking way out there for some of you, but I want you to just think about it.

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Think about your way of interacting with your dog as that conversation. If I ask my dog something like 'sit' and they don't immediately hit the deck, then I look around and go, "Hmm, that's strange because I know that I've built value for that word to mean an action in any location." So, I will immediately look around my location and go, "What's different about this one? Is this something new that I have to create more education for my dog?"

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And it might not be completely obvious to me. I might then move the dog over to the other side and ask for the same behavior. But what I wouldn't do is I wouldn't repeat the cue. I wouldn't get louder. I wouldn't add emotion to it because all of that changes the rhythm.

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It changes the trust. It changes the unwritten contract between my dog and I. That I will show up to you in a certain way. And that way creates the rhythm of our relationship. And that carries right over to training. Now, if I'm training an older dog, one of my dogs who they understand our way of going, they understand that they can trust that nothing bad is ever going to happen. That I'm never going to hurt you, I'm never going to yell at you, I'm never going to blame you.

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That confidence and trust creates the rhythm and training that allows us to train for longer periods of time. That allows me to have periods where I'm not asking for anything. You can just be for a moment while I go and gather my notes and we move on to something else. That couldn't happen with a puppy because their energy and their short attention span brought on by the bursts of energy demands more of me.



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Demands a different rhythm from me and therefore demands very, very short training sessions. What I'm looking for is this peaceful rhythm that happens in my training. Now yes, I get emotionally charged at different times. And so that's part of the rhythm. If you watch dogs, this is fascinating, if you watch two dogs run, and if you're listening to this podcast come on over to YouTube, I'm going to share a series of pictures of two of my dogs just running.

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Those two dogs will get in rhythm with each other almost immediately. And they'll start running on the same leads, and here's something else I've noticed. I have speakers outside here. If my dogs are running around, maybe they have a toy and they're throwing a toy up in the air and I put on music, they will start running to the cadence, to the rhythm of that music. True story. Try it with your own dog.

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Knowing that when I walk courses in agility, I'll always put in music either before or during the walk through when I'm visualizing the run with my dog, I will put in music that will mimic the rhythm that I know that dog runs in. So, it would be very, very different for a dog like Swagger, he ran in a completely different rhythm than my dog Momentum. And when I ran a little dog, my little Jack Russell's, they ran in a completely rhythm to either one of those. Horses are the same way. They have a unique rhythm to the way they just move. But when paired up with another horse, they will adapt to each other and have this amazing rhythm together. It's just so cool to see.

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And I believe that's what happens when you get that level of connectedness with your dog. That they can feel that rhythm and certainly I can feel that rhythm. And you know, if somebody comes to the door and all this chaos goes then it changes the rhythm. Tater Salad has been visiting my brother for a week.

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So, there isn't the explosion at the door and the rhythm is maintained because my other dogs don't go crazy unless Tater Salad is here and then Swagger will cheer him on from the back room. And so, think about [your way of going with your dog](#). Are there chaotic moments during the day? That is helping you to define a break in the rhythm means something needs to be fixed. It's showing you where there's some dog training that can be done.

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And the same is true when you're doing a regular dog training session. You know there's a song and I printed out the lyrics. It's an, I don't know when this is, the eighties? It was a rhythm and blues [song by Anita Baker, and it was called The Rhythm of Love](#). And this is how it starts. "You know, this old world just keeps on spinning round and round and round and sometimes it just spins too fast." And you know, you not only lose your balance, but you lose your rhythm. And that's not unlike when something unexpected happens in our life with our dogs.

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UPS delivery. You lose your rhythm and it's times like these you just need to stop. And you need to find your way again but find your own rhythm because life has a rhythm. Mother nature has a rhythm and oh yes love, love has a rhythm. And I think that rhythm is expressed with your life with your dog.



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So, think about the level of connectedness you want with your dog. And then use that as a way to develop that rhythm you have with your dog and know things aren't always going to go the way we planned. And that's got to be okay. Rather than being triggered. If you are the kind of person, well let's just face it, we will all get triggered when things don't go the way we want.

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But what happens with that trigger? Does your cortisol levels shoot up? Do you start ranting? Do you clench your fist? Do you talk through grit teeth? Just think about the rhythm of a word. Let's pick a word 'really'. You can tell the emotions just by the way I say. "Really!" "Really?" "Really?!". There's three different emotions that are just expressed. That's the rhythm of one word. Imagine the rhythm of an entire conversation.

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Be intentional. And when you're triggered, allow yourself to be triggered to curiosity. Use a word that brings you from a focus of 'someone's got to pay'. Think about it when you're driving in the car and somebody cuts you off, "Wow. I wonder who set his butt on fire?" When you're working at the computer and things just can't seem to go right, what is your normal trigger? I know mine isn't too pleasant during that there example, I got to get better at that.

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Reading drama on Facebook. I have a word that is my trigger to go to a different place. And it isn't a place that affects my stress levels at all. Because that keeps me in rhythm with my life and my dogs, everyday life and the rhythm around the house and I want that same rhythm to be in our training. Now it might be a rhythm that's at a different tempo because the energy is a little higher when we're training, but it's all one big rhythm of our relationship.

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Think about that with your own dogs. What that means to you and recognize if you're new in your dog training journey like my friend who was here last week, "Sit! Sit! Sit, you sit!" That's going to be very different than my rhythm.

But awareness will help you get to a much better place, much, much faster. And I'm hoping that that's exactly what you want for you and your dog. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 119: The Rhythm Of Dog Training And How To End A Session](#)

[Podcast Episode 83: The Dog Training You Do When You're Not Dog Training](#)

[Anita Baker Song on YouTube: Rhythm of Love](#)



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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