

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Holiday celebrations are just a great time for all of us, aren't they? But they can be a very stressful time for your dog. So today I want to help you reduce the stress for your dog during holiday celebrations. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. When I think of Christmas at my home, and I'd go home with my then three dogs and all of my brothers and sisters would be there. That would be nine of them. Most of them with their wives. Most of them with three to four children. That meant our home at Christmas had 40 or more people in it.

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Many of them very small children under the age of six. It could have been a disaster. It was a great opportunity for a small child to be bitten in the face, particularly because two of my three dogs were Jack Russell Terriers. Cue the dramatic Terrier music. Is there such a thing as dramatic Terrier music?

My Jack Russell Terriers were as sweet as sweet could be. But hey terriers got this bad wrap, don't they? So, let's just go with it. How are we going to make sure that the holidays are every bit as amazing as they are meant to be requires a little bit of preparing on your part. But it's going to be worth it I promise because the holidays could also be incredibly overwhelming for your dog. Please don't take for granted that your dog is going to be a hundred percent fine with everything that's going to go on. Or your dog is going to be a hundred percent fine with every person that wants to touch him.

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Your dog may have been up to this point, but they may be sore, they may be getting older, or you may have a puppy in the house. So, let's start by asking this question. Will you be holidaying at home and having family and friends come in, or will you be visiting somebody else? Similar, but a couple of differences. And so, we'll talk about when you go out visiting later in the podcast. For now, let's discuss what we can do when we are the ones who are the hostess for the big holiday celebration.

There's really three stages. The stage one is what we do beforehand. Stage two is what we do the day of, and stage three is what we do in the midst of all these people in our home with our dog or dogs. Okay, prepare. Brush your dog up on Crate Games. You can never go wrong with a dog who's happy to just chillax in their crate. And if you have not played [Crate Games](#) yet my friend you are in for the surprise of your life. I'll leave a link here in the show notes. If you're here watching this on YouTube I'll leave a link, actually I'll leave a little tag. I'll put a tag right there you can just click on.

So, Crate Games will give your dog an opportunity to know "This is my home I'll be chillax and this is cool". And you're going to have your dog play all the different levels of Crate Games. And so, if by chance on the day of the big celebration you decide "You know what I think my dogs had enough of all these people. I'm just going to have my dog go and chill in a back room."

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They're going to go, "Oh, thank you." We'll get more into what that looks like in a minute. So, preparation is going to be Crate Games. Preparation number two, we'll be taking a deep dive into some of the many games I have here on my podcast. I'm going to leave you a link to several different episodes where I teach you how to teach your dog to do different behaviors.



Episode: #128

Reduce Stress For Dogs During Holiday Celebrations

00:03:32

Why would this be a preparation? Because it would be a great opportunity to share with your family maybe three or four behaviors that can show that “Hey, dogs are brilliant. This is why I spend so much time training my dog. Look at how much joy this brings to the dog and how much joy it brings to all of you watching these behaviors that my dog can do.”

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So, brush them up and we might be showing off a little bit at Christmas or Easter or Valentine’s Day whenever we’re having our big celebration, but that’s okay because that helps everybody learn what dogs are capable of. So, we’ve got Crate Games, we’ve got digging into a few of the behaviors that I’m going to share with you here in previous episodes of the podcast. Then you’re going to do things like stuff some [Toppls](#) or some [Kongs](#) to have something that when you want to put them away by themselves that they can have some interactive games. Start playing things like hiding cookies around a certain room, like a quiet, furthest bedroom away from all the action.

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So, you might hide some cookies around there with it and tell the dog search and have a search party. You might walk in and out of that room. So, we’ve got a game that the dog can do and then they’re just going to relax and go to sleep with all the craziness going on in your house. I would make sure that your exercise is on point prior to people coming over. So, you’re walking the dog regularly. You have a routine that takes the edge off the dog emotionally and physically before you have all these people coming into their home.

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Because let’s face it, this is different, you know, it might just be one or two people coming over and one or two may be enough. If you go to [episode number 112](#) here on Shaped by Dog, I talked about something called trigger stacking. Now it could be, oh you’ve been doing a lot of baking and you’re a little bit more stressed and you’re, you know, it’s Christmas. So, you’re wrapping presents and you’re doing all sorts of weird things. So, your dog may have been noticing things are different. And then we have a couple of people coming into the house and now in the other room there’s kids squealing. Trigger stacking. I want you to be aware of that so we can be prepared and not have the dog get overwhelmed.

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So, preparation is going to be increasing the confinement time, playing a lot of Crate Games, teaching your dog and brushing your dog up on those tricks and having him get used to being alone in a bedroom. Now it could be in an ex-pen. It could be in a crate in that back bedroom. Also make sure you brush up on your Hot Zone. You might do Hot Zone with a leash on to prevent your dog from jumping on the guest. You might say, “Hey Susan, my dog’s a rockstar at Hot Zone. They know how to stay up on their dog bed when guests come in, it’s not a problem.” The other thing I’d suggest you do, I put together a [little cartoon that you can download](#).

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And it’s an educational coloring piece. If you have young children around your home during the holidays, this will give them an opportunity to do something with some crayons. And you could explain some of the times it’s good to approach and not approach a dog based on this little cartoon episode. Now you can also add little events that you know your dog would prefer.



Episode: #128

Reduce Stress For Dogs During Holiday Celebrations

00:06:48

Like for example, do not ever pat my dog's ears. So do not ever pat Rover's ears or whatever is specific to your dog you can just add it to this cartoon. So, preparation we've got it. And now we're going to go do day of, you've got a lot of things to do so make sure you make a checklist. Set up the ex-pen where you want it to be, set up the hot zone, get that back bedroom prepared, fill up a few of those really cool enrichment games so that you can throw the dog in the back bedroom and give them an enrichment game for him to play with.

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That's after you've taken the time, if you have the time, to have him appropriately visit with the people. Now day of, I want you to remember this one rule. We can't expect all of your guests to have watched Shaped by Dog and [learn about TEMP](#) and learn when your dog is a little overwhelmed. But you might want to revisit [episode number 20](#), learn about the invisible bubble of pressure that our dogs feel. But we can't expect all of our family and friends to be that dog savvy. What we can help them to know is how a dog will say "no, thank you".

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If my dog moves away when you're trying to pat, he's saying "no, thank you". If my dog turns his head, he's saying "no, thank you". If he licks his lips, just make sure your guests know 'Don't chase my dog. He is allowed to say, "I don't feel comfortable with what's going on".' Listen to the dog. That's all. And of course, if you have a dog that you are unsure of because he's too young and you don't have a history or he's a little old and he might be getting a little bit cranky, which he's allowed to, then you're going to be those dogs' best advocates and you are not going to have unsupervised time with anyone.

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Now my rule of thumb, my dogs all love kids, but I still do not allow the kids with my dogs during holiday celebrations. There's just too much trigger stacking. There's too much opportunity for somebody to say something in the wrong way. I won't take the risk with any of my nieces and nephews.

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So, when the kids want to visit the dogs, it's a special time and we all go down there together. So don't be afraid to make very clear criteria for your family. It could just be one rule. You can post it all around the house. It could be as simple as 'don't touch the dog', or 'if you want to talk to the dog make sure I'm around'. Whatever that is, you are your dog's best advocate. All right, day of, now people are coming in. You might want to have your dog on leash so that they're not jumping on your guests. You might have them on a Hot Zone. You might want to have them as I do.

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I just have my dogs away from the front door while everybody's coming in and then they can come out one at a time or depending on who's here "All right, go and visit." and they all have at it all at once. But it's your decision.

Just be intentional about it in the way that's going to set you and your dogs up for success. Don't forget to play some rounds of [ItsYerChoice](#). If you can get some Turkey or whatever you're going to be feeding that day, put it on the counters to see if your dog wants to put their paws up or give it a sniff because Turkey bones are not good for dogs, so we don't want any accidents. And let's face it there's going to be a lot going on, on that during that big holiday celebration, you won't have time to be really on point. So, brush up ItsYerChoice early and often leading up to that holiday celebration.



Episode: #128

Reduce Stress For Dogs During Holiday Celebrations

00:10:13

So that's if family's coming over. What about if you are going to visit the family? Well, I would still do the same preparing, print out that cartoon for the kids, bring some crayons along. You're going to practice all of those games: Crate Games, ItsYerChoice, Hot Zone, sit to greet people. Practice all the things that are going to be pertinent to your particular dog.

And when you're going to go make sure that you make this list ahead of time. You want to put all these things in a bag. So first of all, you're going to be eating supper. Your dog should be allowed to eat supper. Pack up your dog supper and take it with you. Of course, you're going to need a dog bowl and a water bowl for your dog while you're away.

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Now I'm assuming that it's just going to be a dinner or not like dinner and a movie and an overnight. So, if it is you're going to have to pack more things. But water bowl, your dog's food and the food bowl. Of course, you're going to need some cleanup bags because we're going to be walking our dogs once we're there. You're going to need a leash and a collar or a head halter or a harness, depending on what is your choice.

And a way for your dog to have time away, that could be an ex-pen, or it could be a crate. I don't like to just rely on Hot Zones when I'm visiting somebody else. Because even my dogs who are super well behaved, if they have another dog or if they have a lot of activity, they don't have a place that they know is their spot in the house that they can go and chillax.

So, make sure that bring something with you. I personally when I'm traveling, I love soft sided crates. But again, if you're going to use a soft sided crate make sure your dog has a history of it at home because if they're anxious that trigger stacking can happen when you're in somebody else's home. They might actually chew through that soft sided crate.

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Something that I've never had happened because I prepare for it in advance. Now, just because you're visiting somebody else doesn't mean you're not going to bring things that are going to enrich your dogs during the day. So, it could be Toppl or Kong stuffed with things, treats or their food. I would bring their training treats and I would bring a toy to play with them to take a break. You know, you probably want a little bit of a break away from all the hubbub of the activity. Take your dog outside, do a little bit few Recaller games or Home School the Dog games if you're in one of our programs. Just have some time with you and your dog and then you can go back in.

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Have it all ready. And of course, you're going to have your dog relieve themselves outside before you go in the house. And when you do go in the house, I'm assuming that you've asked ahead and you've cleared this so that nobody goes, "You've brought your dog?!" So, your dog is invited. I've made that assumption.

Make sure your dog's a little bit cleaned up. I mean, it's a holiday, right? Maybe take them to the groomers, get them a little bouffant. And then you're going to have your dog on a leash, so they can't go in, jump all over people. They may or may not go and see what's on the counter because even though your dog may have great ItsYerChoice on the counters at home, they may surprise you with the fact that that doesn't transfer super well in a new environment. But if you go in on-leash it's a great opportunity to see if it does.



Episode: #128

Reduce Stress For Dogs During Holiday Celebrations

00:13:20

The final thing that I would bring when we're going to somebody else's house is a blanket that you can put on your crate. So, your dog may not settle as well in somebody else's home. So, you put them in the crate, you might give them their Toppls or an enrichment game. And then you're going to put the cover over their crate so that they can finish their Toppl and then they can just chill because they don't have to be looking at "Where am I? This is different."

Now I would recommend that you practice this ahead of time, especially if you have a wire crate because dogs can pull in the blankets into their crates. That would be a new form of enrichment for them.

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And if you have a dog that does that, just put a piece of board on top or cardboard on top of your crate that is bigger than the top of your crate so that the dogs can't get to the crate blanket. So, we've got the crate or ex-pen, we've got their water bowls, their food bowls, their dinner, their training treats, crate or ex-pen, a cover for it, some stuffed Toppls, a training toy, of course a leash, harness, or head halter.

Put all that in a bag and you're good to go. Holiday time, let's face it, it's an amazing time to be with people you love and care for. And it can be an amazing time to show them what good dog ownership is like. Inspire them to say, "Hey, I wish I had a dog as well-trained as yours."

That's what I wish for you. And it can come true if you prepare ahead. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

PDF Download:

[Coloring Download for Dog Safety](#)

Resources:

[Crate Games Online](#)

[West Paw Toppl Treat Toys](#)

[Kong Toys](#)

Further Learning:

[Podcast Episode 112: Stressed Dog? How Trigger Stacking Might Be Putting Your Dog Over Threshold](#)

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

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

Games to Play with Dogs:

[Learn the ItsYerChoice Game](#)

[YouTube Video: 5 Games for Puppies](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 18: 4 Puppy and Dog Training Games for Acquired Bite Inhibition](#)

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

[YouTube Video: Target Stick Training Part 1](#)

[YouTube Video: Target Stick Training Part 2](#)



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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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