

Is Your Dog Hyper At Home? How To Teach Relaxation

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG In my last podcast I talked about the hyper or over aroused or over excited dog and part of the therapy I recommended was something I called *Netflix and chill* where we teach the dog to just relax when they see these exciting events. And we got a couple of emails from people going, "Well wait a minute Susan, my dog doesn't chill at home so why would he chill when he's excited?"

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And that brings us to the topic of today's podcast. It's all about those dogs that get the label of behavior junkies. Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And if you are watching this on YouTube, thank you. What I'd love for you to do is hit the like button. And if you're not a subscriber to the channel go ahead and subscribe now. That way you're letting all of the people that are in the algorithm working office know that you think this podcast is worth listening to. So go ahead, hit the subscribe button and let me be the first to say, "Welcome subscriber!"

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Okay, behavior junkies. These are dogs that are either created or previously created if you happen to have a rescue dog. And it doesn't matter if you have a rescue dog and they're coming with some baggage, you just have to identify what you have. And so, what we might have is a dog who expects that if you're home with them you should be interacting with them.

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So, they may look at you when you're at the computer like "What? Come on, let's do something!" They may bring you something. They may offer you behaviors. If you put them in a crate or an ex-pen they may bark. If you leave the room when they're in a crate or ex-pen, they may completely lose it. And if you're in an apartment that could pose a problem for you.

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Here's how these dogs sometimes come to be. It's like people get so excited about doing stuff with their dog that the day looks kind of like this. We get up, we do a little bit of training and then we come back in the house, and I might give the dog a stuffed Kong or something under the title of enrichment, which I begged to question if eating cookies or ice cream, like doggie ice cream out of a rubber Kong is really enrichment. But I digress. And then you might say, "Okay, you're going to have a little nap now because you've done all of that. And then you're going to wake up. We'll do a little bit more training. Then we're going to go for a big walk."

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"You come back. I'm going to give you a puppy puzzle that you can play with, and then you're going to have another nap. And then I'm going to, you know, let you do some searching for food in a snuffle mat or all around the living room. There'll be hidden treasures for you to find. And then maybe we'll go for our second walk during the day, and maybe we'll round it up with some training before dinner time."



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Can you see how your dog turns into a behavior junkie? Because there's an expectation. You are in my eyesight then I need to be entertained in some way. Edutainment, education under the guise of entertainment, that's the best way to educate a dog for sure. Education under the guise of enrichment, it creates this problem dog. Because it creates this expectation that when you sit down to watch a movie you should still be interacting with me, the dog.

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And so that's the problem that we have. And so is it any wonder then when you get up to leave a room that your dog just starts barking or what happens a lot of times is dogs learn "Okay, at bedtime I can chill in my crate. Lights are out. That's fine. You're in bed. I know where you are. We're all good." "But don't put me in a crate or an ex-pen and then you sit down and go into a meeting on zoom because no, you're in the room. I can see you. We need to be doing something." So, let's fix that.

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What's happening is there's some conditioning. Now, part of the problem, and I've said this could happen with a puppy, this could happen with an adolescent, this could happen with a rescue dog. What we want to teach the dog as part of their education is there are times when they need to chill. And that chill can sometimes look like they're chewing on a bone, but it doesn't have to be chewing on a bone.

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With my own dogs, if I am either training them or they're out walking, or they are just chilling around the house. There isn't an expectation of me doing or anybody doing anything with them. Sure, if I say, "Who wants to work?" I would get everybody going, "Yeah! Pick me, pick me! Let's go. I want to go now!" They love to work. I've got high drive dogs and they're trained to be amongst the best in the world in the sport of dog agility. So yeah, they want to go but they also know when it's time to chill.

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And it's just so important. I think it's important for their mental wellbeing. I think it's important so that I can get some stuff done. And sometimes maybe I just want to chillax and watch a Raptors game. And I don't want dogs looking at me with these piercing eyes. "Are we, are we going to work? Did you want me to bring this to you? Did you want to throw that for me? I could find something for you." No, this is chill time. So how do we get there?

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If you remember in [podcast episode 134](#), I talked about teaching a dog to chill from Crate Games. So that's one way, is you teach your dog Crate Games. I'll put a link in the show notes or in the description here on YouTube. You teach the dog [Crate Games](#) which teaches all different aspects of learning a release word, learning how to sit, learning how to ignore distractions in your environment. But it also teaches something called 'relax'.

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So, it looks like this. Your dog understands the release word. We use the word "break", and they also understand a word that means get in your kennel. So it could be, you know, get in your house or whatever you want. So, if I tell my dog to get in your kennel then there is an expectation that they may or may not be working. If they're not working here's what I do.



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I throw a handful of cookies in there and I close the door and I walk away. If they are working, I might do something like put a leash on and play a stage of Crate Games called *you're in you're out*. Where the dog, I give them a release word but because I'm standing super close to the kennel and I'm facing the dog crate, there's no reinforcement for them so they immediately run back into the crate, and I toss them another cookie.

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So, this is what the chill looks like. My dog when I touch the crate they sit, I open the crate door, I give them a cookie. I might do a distraction or two, give them another cookie for you know, being really cool around those distractions. I will say the word "break". They come out. They look at me, I'm not doing anything exciting. They go back in. I toss in some cookies and I pin the door back.

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Now I'm not going to do this with a dog who's just brand new to Crate Games. This is a dog who understands that you don't leave the crate unless you hear your release word which is 'break', for my dogs. And so, I'll build that duration. I'll watch them sniff around. And I'll also kind of sit down and pretend I'm you know, ignoring them. And eventually they're just going to lay down and I might wait for a couple of seconds and then I'll go and toss them another couple of cookies.

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And I'm only going to do that for a little bit of time and then I'm going to release them. And they can go about their business. Now, if they are a busy dog, I love using an ex-pen. And here's the other thing that I love to use guys. You need to have dog beds. Now, this is your aunt Susan, crazy aunt Susan giving you permission to buy more dog beds.

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I would like one of two different kinds of dog beds for you, and you can get several of each if you choose. So, number one are dog beds that are raised like a platform, some dogs really like those. And I like to get them big enough so that my dog can lie on their side. Now, those of you with Irish Wolfhounds, hope you have a big place if you're getting a raised dog bed. Big enough to lie on their side.

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Second kind of dog beds that I want you to get are dog beds that have a wall, like they have sides. So, a lot of dogs they'll like to lay there with their chin on the roll-up wall of the dog bed. So why do I like those two different types of dog beds? It's just so darn easy to transfer the criteria of 'wait for a release' to something that's got an obvious barrier. So, the obvious barrier is the wall of the dog bed or stepping off of the raised platform to the lower level, to the floor. And so, I love, love, love those. And here's what I do. I will start with one in the ex-pen.

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Now, if you've got a dog who can climb or jump out of the ex-pen you either put a lid on the ex-pen, or you have a really tall ex-pen, or please don't put the raised dog bed in the ex-pen because you're just giving them a boost to get up and over. So, I would use a dog bed that's got sides. Now I would not put a dog bed in a crate or in an ex-pen unless I'm a hundred percent confident that that dog is not going to be chewing or [shredding the dog bed](#).



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And if they are then what I'll do is I will put the dog bed in and I will do something like read a book. So, I'm kind of present, the ex-pen might be right in front of me. And if I see the dog licking the dog bed then what I'll do is I'll get up and I'll take the dog bed out. What Tater Salad used to do, it was really obvious. As a precursor to starting to chew on it, he grabbed the dog bed and he would just throw it around the ex-pen.

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We always made sure there were other things in there for the dog so he could chew on, there were indestructible toys in there for him. There were bones for him to chew on but putting your mouth on a dog bed that means the dog beds got to come out. And after doing this very consistently he learned if he wants to lay on a nice dog bed, he can't put his mouth on it.

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So, you've got your dog bed, you've got your dog in the ex-pen. There should be at least one other thing in there for them to chew on, something they love. Now I can give you some suggestions of things that you should have in there for your dog that you want. I'm going to give you some that you shouldn't have as well.

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I will tell you what I use with a big Asterix. There is a risk. So, I use raw marrow bones. Well, they come with a little bit of meat. We get them from the grocery store, from the butcher department. So, they're cut. If you can get the organic ones, that's even better. You want them big enough that the dogs can't get the marrow caught over their lower jaw. We wouldn't be the first person who had their dog go to the Veterinarian to get one of those bones cut off there.

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The other problem with the marrow bone, and if you get the bones long enough then that's not going to happen. The other problem with them is there is a potential, these are raw, but there is a potential if your dog just chews on the bone that they could get a slab fracture in one of their teeth.

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So, I'm giving you that Asterix. I'm telling you that I will take that risk, but you don't have to. Things like horns. I'm not a big fan of using things like cow hooves, not a big fan at all of those. You can use something like a pizzle. So, you can google a pizzle, but what I would like you to do is I always make sure the pizzle has a holder.

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So you can go to Amazon and buy holders that you jam these pizzles in. And why I like having them in a holder is because when these get small, most dogs are going to want to try and swallow it whole. I don't want that. So, I will let them chew it down in the holder. And I just made a holder out of an old Kong.

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I just made a slit and it's really hard to get it in and out. So, it will be hard for the dog to get it in and out. And when it gets down, I'll just throw that piece out. Yes, it's a waste, so what? Better safe than sorry. Here's what I do not want you to use. I don't want you to use for chewing, number one, raw hides.



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Oh, go to my friend Rodney Habib. Google *Rodney Habib* or *Planet Paws and raw hide*. He'll give you the down low on why you should never. Raw hide is like garbage from the leather industry, and it's just filled with chemicals. Don't give your dogs raw hide. Also, I'm not a big fan of giving a dog things like plastics to chew on that have like a food, different colorings in there.

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So, I'm more a fan of giving the dog something that actually is or was some sort of food form. You can also just [give your dog toys](#) to have in their ex-pen but not ones that they can destroy. If you've got a chewer, it's just dangerous. You don't want to do that. I also don't like giving stuffed animals. Things can happen, they can pull them apart, they can shred things and they might eat them. So just be cautious but we need our dog to be entertained or have something in there for them to chew on because that helps lower that anxiety.

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So, we've got our dog in the ex-pen. Now let's say you're working in your office, and you want to get up and go make yourself a coffee. I will release my dog from the ex-pen and here's where having multiple dog beds around the house comes in. On the way to the kitchen, I will stop at the first dog bed. And because I'm stopping there my dog will hop in. I won't tell them. They'll just offer to go in because I'm standing there, they're like, "What are we doing? I see something here. I'll hop in or something."

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They'll go in. I'll give them a cookie. I might wait. They'll offer to lie down. I'll give them another cookie. And then what I'll do is I'll see if I can take a few steps away, come back, give them another cookie. I want to see how far away I can get. So if you only have one dog bed, get to the kitchen, turn the kettle on or the coffee maker and then come back and give a cookie. See if you can do that.

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I've done this with like little wee puppies, and I can get build up to a great distance away, especially if they can see me. But what I love to do with the little ones is get to the next dog bed and I'll release them from the first and they'll go on the next until I get into the kitchen. There'll be a dog bed outside of the kitchen and I'll be able to toss cookies in there while I'm making my beverage of choice.

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Release the puppy or the dog. And this is great time to let them out for a potty break, take them back upstairs. You've just given them some true enrichment. You've allowed them to use their brain. You've allowed them to offer the choice to go in the bed. You've allowed them to practice their listening for their release words.

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And then you've got them back upstairs. Now, it's far better than letting your dogs scream at the top of their lungs because you left the room. Now, if you want to strategically leave your dog in an ex-pen and leave the room, I would suggest you just do it by getting up and walking around the room. And then going back and sitting down. Getting up and walking. If you have a closet in the room, that's ideal. Just go in the closet, come back out and then come back and sit down. And after you sit down, then you might get up and give your dog a cookie.



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If you have a dog who has true anxiety about you leaving, they have separation anxiety, I strongly encourage you to seek the help of a Veterinarian Behaviorist. But you can do this if your dog really doesn't have true anxiety, they just are you know, "I'm used to being with you", you can use a remote feeder or you can just strategically leave the room, come back and give them a cookie, sit down. Sometimes come back in, sit down, then get up and give them a cookie. So, they don't always get the trigger.

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"Okay, when she comes back in the room, I get my cookie. I can't wait until she gets back in the room. I can't wait. I can't wait." No, sometimes you just come back in and when you give them a cookie, I don't go crazy. I just, I just give them the cookie. I don't say "Good! Yay. This is good. You did something really well!" Because I want them not to be performing. I don't want them to be behaving. I just want them to be chilling.

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Now if when you are walking around the house the dog grabs a bone and gets in and just jumps in a dog bed and starts chewing. Those are the times that I look for the opportunity to grab some cookies and just "Oh, you're chewing on a bone in your dog bed. Here's a cookie." And I'll go back about my business.

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I'm building the dog's desire to be in a dog bed chilling. Chilling starts small. [It has to be intentional](#). At first your dog might give big eyes going "Yeah, look it! I'm doing something. Am I going to get cookies?" Eventually when you walk from bed to bed, when the dog goes "There's something about these beds that this chick loves." and they learn to relax for longer and longer, your dogs will be like my dogs, and they'll just seek out the beds on their own and they'll be chilling all day long until you say, "Hey, who wants to do some work?"

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Trust me, it works. It'll work for your dog. You just have to be patient. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 134: How To Teach A Dog Stay WITHOUT Luring, Collar Pops Or Using The Word "Stay"](#)

[Podcast Episode 98: Puppy Home Alone: Are You Creating Chaos or Calm?](#)

[Podcast Episode 55: Pro Dog Trainer's Guide to Toy](#)

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



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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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