

# Frantic Dog? Are You Training Both The Hold And The Do?

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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SG Today's podcast is inspired by a listener who left a comment on YouTube. And I love reading your comments so wherever you're listening to this podcast, please go ahead and leave me a comment. If you're watching this on [YouTube](#), I'd love for you to give this video a thumbs up and subscribe if you're not a subscriber.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And if you like dog training, you're going to love today's podcast. Here's the comment that was left by Helen Hargett. And I got to tell you, when I read this, it kind of hurt my heart a little bit. So, Helen was writing in response to podcast [episode number 136](#) where I talked about over excited or over aroused dogs which has prompted a lot of you guys to leave comments and write. So, it's a pretty hot topic.

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Here's what Helen wrote. *"How does this excited state compare to the catch all term "leash reactive"? My 15-week-old puppy when taken to puppy class he pulled, and he couldn't listen or take treats." [depending on the breed of dog in that environment, it's not a surprise to me at all.] "We worked in the corner of the classroom to be able to do the same. At 5 months a dog trainer labeled him as "leash reactive". Now he'll play with another dog on leash when he's allowed. He's not aggressive. He never barks or growls. He's just over aroused. I've decreased distance but was told he would always be leash reactive and he would turn dog aggressive. Please just tell me if this has always just been 'over arousal'?"*

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Well Helen, first of all, as I always say, our dogs are doing the best they can with the education we've given them in the environment we put them in and so are people. So, no disrespect to this dog trainer but they're just doing the best they can with the education they've got.

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And here's what I know for sure. I never let somebody's opinion limit me. Because their knowledge of saying this 15-week-old puppy is leash reactive and will turn dog aggressive and that's the way it is, that's accumulation of their current education, but their education does not need to limit your possibilities. Don't ever let anybody limit you or your dog. Because possibilities in dog training is not limited by their education or their imagination. Possibilities in dog training is not limited by Susan Garret's education or imagination.

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It's a fluid science. We're growing and learning especially about reinforcement based and game-based dog training. And especially please, don't ever let anybody put a label on your dog. I don't care if it's 15 weeks or 15 years, don't let anybody put a label on your dog. Let's talk about what's going on here. This puppy is excited. It's in this new environment and you know, it's excited because "Oh look there's dogs, there's people, I love them all." Remember in [episode number 136](#) where I talked about dog's acting from a place of their front brain or their back brain.



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I mean, we can get really technical and label the brain, but let's just keep it in gross front brain, back brain. So, the back brain is when something [triggers a dog's fear response](#) they just react. Fight, flight, freeze. It also is a very similar response when a dog is over aroused. You can't teach anything to a dog when they are in their back brain, they are just responding. All the learning happens when our dog is in their front brain. So, they have to be confident and not triggered or alarmed.

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Now back when I was taught how to train people to train dogs, we would get a 15-week-old puppy. And this is probably why I reacted so strongly. I remember it was a Labrador puppy that came into class and was like, "Hello world!" and just happy and bouncing and "I want to visit you!" You know, they were leaning into their collar back then, it was choke chains, I'm talking about in the eighties.

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And this little puppy was leaning into his choke chain pawing at the air, standing on his back feet, wanting to get to the people. And here's how I was told to deal with it, as the head instructor, I wasn't the head instructor. I was, you know, just learning. And I was told that you correct the puppy on their choke chain until their feet come off the ground. One way and another, and one way and another, and one way or another until they settled down.

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Now, what that does is a puppy who's overexcited, it puts them out of their back brain. They become more afraid of you than they are excited about the other dogs or the people, which is such a shame to what end and at what cost. So unfortunately, there are still people doing that. And I know that if you're listening to this, chances are it's not you. I hope it's not you.

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And guess what if it is you, you're still welcome here. I hope that something that I have to share might encourage you to think of this in a different way. Because what we want to do as I mentioned in our previous episode podcast episode number 136, we need to get our dogs to do two things.

We need to get our dogs to lower their emotional response to the triggers that they see. And we need to get our dogs to raise their responsiveness when they're excited. Now I say, "get our dogs to" like "it's their responsibility", but that's not what I mean.

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We need to help our dogs, would be a better way to say it, to lower the excitement to triggers while, and separately, our dogs are learning to be more responsive when they are excited. And today I'm going to give you examples that Helen, you, or anybody else listening can jump right in and do it. So, we're going to separate these into two different things. And I mentioned in the previous podcast episodes I really need your dog to have an understanding of a few behaviors.

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So, if your puppy is only 15 weeks old you may or may not have any of these behaviors but jump back into some of our previous podcast episodes and podcast episode number 136. I list them all out there for you. And so, what we need to start with is one or two behaviors. I'd like three: sit, down, stand. And you can replace stand because it is sometimes more difficult, especially with a puppy.



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Something like twirl, which means spin to the right and “spin” which means spin to the left. Or you can come up with your own ones. You can say left and right if you want but just some simple behaviors, sit, down, and stand, or twirl. Those are the things that we're going to start with.

Let's just say we're [starting with sit](#). So, our goal is we want the dog to be able to have success rehearsing independently any one of these behaviors. Now, why do I put the word independently in there?

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Because a lot of times these behaviors are taught with prompts or lures. So, the dog won't sit when you ask them to sit. Sometimes they'll lie down or sometimes they'll, I don't know, back up. They're not sure what the word means. So, we need to know that the dog understands the word, the cue, and then we're putting layers of more and more and more learning.

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So, take your behavior, take one behavior: sit, do it in 10 different areas. If you have four rooms in your house, bathroom, a kitchen, a living room, a bedroom, there's four different rooms you can rehearse this and do it a couple of times. See how much success your dog has with you saying a word, they do it, not moving until you give the release word. I use the word “break”. You can use whatever you like. I just don't like the word “okay”. Which is a word a lot of trainers teach.

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So, what we want to do now is raise our dog's responsiveness to this cue with different levels of excitement. So, we're going to start with very little to no excitement. We have to prove in 10 different locations that the dog really understands the word ‘sit’, the word ‘down’, and one other cue. So, you're going to do it in four rooms of your house. You might go into your front yard, you might go into your backyard, go in your car, put them on the backseat of your car and ask for those behaviors there.

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As many different locations as you can. What you want to do is when you say the word will the dog do it? And if they don't, you don't go “Sit! I say sit!” No, you go I asked you a question and your dog said, “And I told you what I know.” And if they didn't sit in 8 of the 10 locations the first time you asked, they're telling you “Ah you didn't really teach this so swell.” Remember, dogs are always doing the best they can with the education we gave them. So, let's go back to basics and teach the dog what sit means, what down means. And when I say sit, don't down, and when I say down don't sit. And what is the release word?

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So now we've got our dog that understands at least two of these. And now we're going to raise the excitement a little bit. So, we're going to ask the dog to sit. And we might take a step to the side, “Oh, this is different.” And then come back and reward and release. Then you're going to work up to going in a circle.

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And then before you come back and reward and release, you're going to go back to going to a bigger circle. So now we've built in a distraction of distance and of time holding that position by now. Hopefully we've got a 15 second sit before the dog releases.



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So, what we just worked on there is 'take the position when I asked you in a calm matter and hold the position when I raised the excitement a little bit'. Now we're going to switch that around. So, you might walk and ask your dog to sit. So, you're not just standing still, can they sit then? Oh, that's a mind blow. And all we're doing is adding little, tiny layers of excitement. You're going to change things like I'm going to sit on the floor and ask you to sit and down and stand.

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"Oh, that's different. I can't, I can't do that one." And that's because different is a little level of excitement, a little level of arousal. The more that we inoculate our dog's brain to excitement and arousal in these small, small little doses, the more the dog A - understands the behaviors and B - understands that even when things are different and exciting, I can still perform the things that you asked.

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So, you're going to build up small layers and go really slowly guys. You want your dog to have success. Remember, independent rehearsals of success is our goal. And so, I'm lying on the floor. Here's a good one. Ask somebody to knock and ask your dog to sit. "I can't sit now. I got to go run to the door because I just heard someone knock." That's a higher level one.

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But you might be rolling around. You might toss a ball, "Oh, I love balls!" and ask them to sit. Remember asking them to sit and then tossing the ball we're working on 'can you hold a position'. Tossing a ball and then asking them to sit is different. It's more exciting. So, you've got to work both parts. Can you hold when there's excitement? And can you do when there's excitement? Most people just work on the hold, they don't work on the do.

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Now when you get the dog getting more and more layers, here's what I want you to do. Take a toy. Let's start with a moderately favorite toy, put it on a leash or tie a rope around it. And you're going to get your dog engaged with it. So, they're playing with it. And then you're going to take it out of their mouth, ask them to sit, then you're going to slap it on the ground. Do they break the sit? "Oh no, we've done all these layers. They're not going to break the sit." Can you snake it on the ground and then give them the release word?

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Yeah, they're going to dive on that. Now you're snaking it on the ground they can't quite catch it and you're going to ask them to sit. So, their toy's still being snaked on the ground. Can they sit? Remember what part are you working? Are you working on do under excitement or hold under excitement? You got to keep working both of these.

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"Because I'm excited! There's my favorite toy! Oh, it's moving! You're running out of the room with it." "Oh, you asked me to sit. Aahhh." When we can get that Helen, we can get your puppy taking treats in the class. The other thing I like to do with puppies, I had a puppy Buzzy, and I wrote a book about him, and it's called [Shaping Success](#). Buzzy couldn't take treats in class. So, what I would do is I would get to class early.



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And when there was nobody in the building and the class before had gone, they had a 10-minute trade-off, and I would go in and I would do some practicing with him with no one in the building. And as soon as the class started to come in, I left, and I did class out in the parking lot. I had the window open, and I listened to what they say.

He couldn't be around the dogs. He was screaming. He was crazy. He couldn't do it. So why make him fail by putting him in that environment? I just did the classroom in the parking lot. Good thing it was in a nice weather so I could work from the parking lot.

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And eventually I think it took six weeks before he could happily work in that room because I kept going in there for 10 minutes at a time. By week, maybe it was week five I can't remember actually, he could work in that environment. All right, Helen. So, there's two parts to this remember. That is the part of holding a position when it's exciting and doing something when it's exciting.

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I build up those layers until I can throw a Frisbee and my dog is running and about to catch it and I might say sit, down, stand and they, boom, boom, boom, boom they do those behaviors and then "Oh! The Frisbee's on the ground but now you can go get it." I worked up to when I had my Jack Russell Terriers, they loved squirrels and I would say "Oh there's a squirrble!" and I'd let the door open, and I'd say, "Go get the squirrble!" and they'd go chasing the squirrels. And then I'd say, "Okay, that's enough." before they could catch the squirrels, I'd call them back.

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That's listening when you're excited. That's the highest level of listening while you're excited, but that's listening while you're excited. The next part of this, the first part is we need our dogs to not be so excited by the triggers. And so that involves you working from a distance. First of all, taking all the triggers. And as I mentioned in podcast episode number 136, we're going to eliminate. If your dog sees, I don't know, wildlife and they just lose it. And they can't, why put them in that environment?

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Because you're getting all these adrenaline coursing to their brain and they can't think and you're going to be fighting. Just walk where there's no wildlife for a little bit or you know, do exercises around the house. There's a lot of things you can do to stimulate the brain and physically get that dog working their body without working around wildlife.

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So, what we are going to do is you're going to list out all your triggers. Let's say I have a trigger that when I pick up my car keys my dogs start spinning and barking because they know we're going for a walk. That's one we need to eliminate. We need to lower our dog's excitement response to that.

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This trigger has got to be white noise. "Oh, you picked up a ballpoint pen. Well, I don't care about that." Whatever they are. You pick up your leash, you clip your leash on, the dog loses it. You walk out the front door, wow they go to the end of the leash. Boom. So, whatever it is, we are going to now work at turning it into white noise.





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So, here's what you're going to do. If you have more than one set of keys that would be great, leave them around the house. Pick them up. Dog goes nut, put them back down. Go about your business.

So maybe 10, 20, 30 times a day, eventually you're picking them up the dogs going to go "Oh, that's nothing." And then you're going to go back to what I talked about are some calming anchors.

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So, if the dog comes around because you picked up the keys, just give a nice pull of an ear or a nice long stroke of the body. We're not going to do any invigorating 'atta boy!', 'smack a baby!' kind of patting. We're going to do nice, slow, calming strokes. "Now Susan, how do I get my dog in the car otherwise?" Well, I would suggest you go out to the car, put your dog in and then go and grab your keys if that's an option. Or put your keys in a mitten.

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I know if you're in California, you don't have a lot of mittens. You probably have some socks. Come home and put your keys in a sock, pick up the sock for a while. But you're going to still have to go about doing this desensitization around the house, right? So that you can pick up keys. And if it's the leash, it's the same deal. Pick up the leash, clip it on and before the dog goes cray, cray unclip it.

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We're working on the Collar Grab as I mentioned in our previous podcast. So, whatever it is, we want to get to a point where we can unclip on the leash, open the door, if the dog goes crazy close the door. Go back and chillax. When you do all these things together, they do work in harmony. They're interactive. So, teaching a dog, we're not teaching when we're working triggers, we are conditioning.

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We're just working on the emotional response. You can't dog train this, but you can condition a better emotional response. Calming triggers. Remember you have to go to your happy place.

And one of you have to be calm and I'm counting on it being you. If you go to [podcast number 76](#), it's a really important one, especially for dogs who get excited on leash.

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Podcast number 76, it goes hand in hand with [Perch Work \(Pivots and Spins\)](#) where we teach the dog we're walking this way, I turn into the dog, we pivot together and go back the way we came. So, I need you to work at opening the door, releasing the dog, taking one step out, saying pivot, turning, come back in, reward your dog.

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How are you going to be able to do this? Because you're working your leash walking. As I mentioned in podcast episode 76, you're working it from your living room. Your dog's walked around the living room on leash so much that when you go to open the bedroom door and walk into the bedroom door it's like "Well, this is no big deal. There's like, a bed and a couple teddy bears." *And so, no judgment, you've got Teddy bears in your bed it's all good.*

You've worked at going out of all kinds of doors that don't lead to the outside before you go to opening the front door for the first time in a long time. You go out, say pivot, come on back in, reward.



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And that might be your walk today. And tomorrow you might get to the end of your lane. Come out, pivot, come on back in and that's it. Eventually you and your dog are having the most amazing experience walking on leash and your dog is looking at other dogs walking by like white noise. Now it may not happen with the very little bit that I've given you here in this 20-minute podcast, but it will give you the start of something amazing.

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And I know if you keep growing the layers of independent success on 'how to be calm and listen when things could be exciting' at the same time working at building calmer triggers to things that are exciting, you are going to have that amazing walk. And no Helen, your dog is not going to grow up to be an aggressive dog.

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I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 136: Help Your Excited Dog Calm Down And Stop Barking, Lunging, Spinning, Nipping](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 135: Test Your Dog's Sit Stay Training](#)

[Book: Shaping Success by Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 76: Leash Walking: Distracted, or Reactive Dog? These Games Will Help!](#)

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



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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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