

# Unsolicited Dog Training Advice: How To Protect Your Confidence And Your Dog

### Speaker Key

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### Transcript

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SG If you've ever trained your dog in public, or if you've ever put a video on social media, chances are somebody has offered you unsolicited advice. Now, your immediate response is a clap back. Something like, "I'm sorry, were you talking to me, or did you mistake me for somebody who actually cared what you thought?" But you know, that's just not polite nor is it healthy for you. And I'm going to get into that today. Plus, I'm going to share with you what you can do in those situations.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. This question has come up so often since we started this podcast, "what can I do when people offer me unsolicited advice?" And at first I thought, "oh, come on really a whole podcast on that?" Now that I sat down and started designing this episode, I'm like, "holy crap, I don't know if I can fit all this into one podcast!" So, let's dive in.

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Number one thing. I want you to keep this goal in mind. Our job is always to protect and grow confidence, both our dogs and our own. So, keep that in the back of your mind. And number two, I want you to think, let's say you're broken down on the side of the road and somebody pulls over and says, "Hey, do you need help changing that tire?"

And the likelihood would be, you're going to say, "oh no, I got this", or, "yeah, that would be great actually, I would love help", but chances are, you're not going to think "what a jerk, what are you doing offering to help me?" So, we got to remember when people offer advice that they're just genuinely trying to be helpful.

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Even though it might trigger us, and sometimes they come at it from a place of their ego, that if we believe deep down, that people are doing the best they can and they genuinely want to be helpful. Then it's easier for us to not get triggered when that situation happens. But I'd also like you to keep in mind, a study done in 2015.

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I don't know how reliable this is, but it suggested that only 4% of the population of North America actually get professional advice for help with their dog.

So, it's highly unlikely any random stranger giving you advice on dog training actually has any credentials behind that information. So, truth is we really don't want to hear it, do we? So, what can we do?

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What I've done is I've divided this into four scenarios. Number one would be, if somebody gives you advice online, now that is going to be a different situation than if you are out in public and probably a stranger would come out and give you advice on what's going on. That would be different than if it's somebody that is an invited guest into your home.



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Have you ever had that? People trying to train your dog or give you advice on it? Believe it or not, it happens to me a lot. And the fourth, and I think the most delicate of all these scenarios would be when it's an authority figure. So, your Veterinarian or somebody that you're taking classes from, or an instructor in a workshop tries to give you advice on your dog or wants to take your dog and help you.

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So, we're going to look at all of those scenarios. And what I want you to think about is number one, what will be - this is super important guys - what is going to be your internal dialogue? What will be your internal reaction? That's got to happen decisively, and first.

Number two, what will be your external reaction? And clapping back really isn't a good idea.

Even though, you know, when it's online, you might like type it in the comments and feel really good, and then you're going to delete it and go, "that's not the kind of person I really want to be".

So, it's your internal reaction, then your external response, then it's going to be your takeaway lessons from the situation from what has happened.

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And then it will be, what can you do proactively for the next time this might happen to you? And finally. What's your recovery plan.

So, internal dialogue, your external response, your what are your takeaway lessons from this situation? What can you do proactively to avoid this from happening again?

And what is your recovery response? So, ideally as we go through these situations, that recovery response is going to become less and less necessary.

But I just want to preface this by saying, this happens to me, on a pretty frequent basis. So let's pick a scenario. Let's say you are out in public with your dog, and there's a puppy in the environment.

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Now you are pretty confident your dog is okay with puppies, but your dog freezes and maybe growls at the puppy and you realize instantly, "hey, [my dog doesn't feel comfortable](#)".

So, you redirect your growling dog by saying, "search", throwing a cookie in your direction, away from the puppy, and then getting your dog out of there, giving them reinforcement.

And that kind of scenario is when people see an emotional response, confuse it for an operant choice and then feel the need to tell you why "you've just rewarded your dog for growling."

And if you're listening to this thinking, "well yeah, they did". Then we need to maybe do a podcast on the difference between emotional responses and conscious decisions in our dogs.

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And if that's something that you'd like to see, jump over to YouTube, leave me a comment and maybe we'll do that in the future. So that's the situation. So, what if that happens online?

Let's say you post a video, you say, "hey, I thought my dog was good with puppies, but I wanted to show you X, Y, and Z" and somebody then goes off. Now, number one, you've got to recognize online there are a lot of people that are just flat out trolls.



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They are there to stir things up, they're there to be a contrarian. They are not there because they have any interest in any constructive dialogue. So, use your block and ban button. Just go ahead and use it and don't give that person a second thought.

But quite often, remember, people are trying to do the best they can, and they are offering to change your tire. And if your internal response is, "oh, this guy's just trying to help me out". Right? Like if you're watching this on YouTube, you can see I've got a poster of Swagger behind me and it's got a great quote from Wayne Dyer that says "when we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change."

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So, if we change the way this unsolicited advice, it really is, it's really going to change. And recognize that, even if that person's ego is triggered, maybe they're angry because you aren't being, you know, corrective to your dog.

You've got to know that their criticism doesn't define your dog or your relationship with your dog. It just defines their education to this point in the realm of dog training.

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And that's okay, that's okay. If you are listening to this podcast, there's a really good chance either you've decided to be a person who comes up with solutions from a place of reinforcement and kindness. And it doesn't mean that everybody else is there. And so that's okay, they have their opinions.

But what can we do internally? It's online, it's easy. You can say, "hey, that's a sign from God that I've got to get off this computer or stop scrolling and go and train my dog." Every time you get a criticism like that, you just take it as, "thank you, yeah, I'm going to go train my dog right now."

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If you feel the need to comment, you need to remember my friend Dr. Ellen Bader. I've quoted her on this podcast many times "when you feel furious, it's time to get curious", what is triggering that person? What point of view are they coming from?

So, what can you do with this person? You could open a dialogue by saying something like, "have you worked in behavior modification? Do you have some insight of something that you are seeing that I maybe am not seeing?"

Now the word behavior modification might just trigger them immediately. They don't know what that means. If they say, "well, I've trained X number of dogs before."

Again, your clap back wants to say, "well, I've had a brain my entire life that doesn't make me a neurosurgeon."

But we don't go there. We just go, can we deflect? Can we invite dialogue? Are we curious? Or do you just want to change a subject?

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You can say, "hey, do you do a lot of emotional conditioning with your dog? Because I'd love to know what you're doing in that realm." If they say, "oh, bah-bah-bom", you know, you could come back with a very kind, "you know, dog training is a personal journey and this is the direction I'm going in."



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You can also, this is a great one, blame a professional, “hey, I’m actually working with Susan Garrett, and so she’s pretty strict about what I can and can’t do, but thanks for the input.”

The most important thing is that you need to protect yours and your dog’s confidence. So, when somebody is critical of you anywhere. It doesn’t matter if it’s online, if it’s in person, if it’s, you know, over the phone, wherever. Immediately, there’s some hurt that happens.

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There’s some guilt, especially if it’s because your dog is growling, because your immediate response might be to apologize because your dog growled, and that should not be your response. Because your dog growling is a natural behavior. It’s a natural response from your dog. It’s communication to you and it’s okay, there’s no need ever to apologize for that. So online, super simple. You’re going to get that internal dialogue by going, “hey, this guy just trying to be helpful, cool.”

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If you want to invite him into some dialogue, ask him “what’s your history with emotional conditioning” or “have you worked in behavior mod before? Do you have anything you’d like to add to that situation?”

If not, you can just take the exit, “yeah, I’m working with a professional”, you know what, even if you’re not, you can use my name. It’s okay, “I’m working with a professional, I’m working with Susan Garrett and she’s pretty tight on what I should and shouldn’t be doing. So, thank you for your input, I’ll give it some consideration.” That’s all. End of story, right? That’s all online, much easier, but now you’ve got to go.

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“Did I handle this well, how am I feeling? Did it make my blood pressure rise?” If it did, then you’ve got to learn to either, get offline, not post your training, or be able to deflect those feelings back into a way to detoxify your body.

So, I always like to just wipe my shoulders and kind of clean my energy space. “This is mine, it’s about how much I love my dog. It’s about how confident I am that I’m on the right path. I’m going to maybe not be confident that I know everything I have to know. I maybe not be confident that I know what every step in the next 10 days is going to be, but I’m confident that I’m on the right path.”

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So, boom, boom, boom. Wipe that negative energy off and go play with your dog. That’s it for when you’re dealing with somebody online. Now, complete stranger at the park. This is one where I would apologize, but here’s when I would apologize. “Hey, I’m sorry my dog’s response made you feel uncomfortable. I’m just going to put my dog away or I’m going to go play with my dog.”

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So you’re not apologizing because your dog growled, you know what, natural response. Apologizing because that made you feel uncomfortable.

Now, if your dog lunged out and scared the puppy, then that’s different. But if it’s just a natural response and you redirected and you got out of there, then no need to apologize, except for that person feeling uncomfortable and then deflect.



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Deflect, blame a professional. Thank them. Right, they offered to change a tire. "I appreciate your input, I'll give it some consideration when I'm at home tonight, drinking heavily." No, probably don't say that. "I appreciate your input and I'll give it some consideration on the drive home." So just something that closes that door.

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Closes the door, because knowing number one, they're just trying to be helpful. Number two, it's highly unlikely you're bumping into Jean Donaldson at the park and there she's giving you some really good advice because Jean is a great professional who knows, no sense trying to give somebody advice unless they actually are wanting it.

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So, the people who are trying to give you this unsolicited advice, chances are, they're not people you really want to listen to. So that's at the park. Again, same scenario. So, you've got to go through the same thing when you get that person going. "Hey, do you mind if I give you some advice?", do not be triggered, go, hey, they're trying to offer to change my tire. Life is good. They're being kind, always smile.

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Just let them, you know, while you're feeding your dog or playing with your dog, say, "I absolutely appreciate your offer to help, but we're good. We're working on a program and we're, we're on a journey, so thank you. But I'm just going to get my dog out of this situation for now".

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Whatever it is, say it in a smile, because if you get defensive, you are triggering within your body that there's something you've done wrong, or there's something that your dog has done wrong. And that is not what happened here. So, thank them, smile, deflect, say, "I'm working with a professional, we've got this pretty strict on what I should and shouldn't be doing".

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You could say something like, "this was my bad". There's a lot of things you could say "my bad, I put my dog in a situation I thought would turn out one way and it didn't. So, a hundred percent, this is on me". Let's blame the professional, blame yourself. Get your dog out of there, that's it.

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Now you're going to go in the car. What could you have done differently? How could you have been more proactive? Being proactive could be like, getting a vest for your dog. "My dog is working through dog challenges" or like an orange "caution, please give my dog space" or wear a t-shirt 'my dog's in training' something that's really bright. If you're going into an area that, that you don't want confrontation with your dog, then just be proactive.

And be proactive with, what are you going to say? How are you going to get out of that situation in a way that your dog doesn't get defensive? So what are you going to do when you get home? What did you learn from that situation?

And what can you do differently so that the dog doesn't get triggered or that you get out of the situation with the strange conversation or the stranger's conversation quicker.



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What if this happens at home? See, here's what I do in my own home. When people come to my home, my dogs are always away, and then they go, "oh, where's the dogs?" And then I say, "sure, I'll let X, Y, and Z dog out".

It's rare that I'll let all of the dogs out, but here's all I ask. Don't throw a toy and please don't give them any commands. If you want to see some tricks, I can do them. That's all. Please don't throw anything. No matter how much Swagger in particular will tell you he needs it and please don't give them any commands. That's all. Then I'll let my dogs out.

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And if I see it's going south, I'll just say, yeah, "they've had a long day. We're putting them up." Boom. That's it, we're done. I love for my dogs, especially to interact with my nieces and nephews and they get some good kid time, but I always give them one or two ground rules, I don't give them a list. I just give them one or two. Being proactive so the situation ends well, and the situation is a positive outcome for both the kids and the dogs.

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Now the toughie, you're at the Veterinarian. The dog does something, the Veterinarian goes, "hey, you got to, you gotta knock that in the butt". Maybe he growls at a Technician, and if my dog growls at a Technician, he doesn't feel comfortable. Here's what I would do, I'd say, "hey, do you mind if we just stop for a second?" I get the dog off the table. If they're on a table, and I'm going to see if they'll tug, I'll give them some cookies and I'll say, "listen, I'm going to pay for this exam, but I'm going to take my dog out of here".

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Now, if the dog is sick or there's an emergency and you really have to get that dog examined, well you can try and see if the dog would take reinforcement, if they're really upset, they may not. So, they may have to be muzzled. And if you've listened to [podcast, episode number 153](#), then I know that you've gone through the muzzle training.

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But best case scenario, you would get your dog out of there and you just come back for at least five visits where the dogs just in there get some cookies, gets out. We're conditioning a [positive emotional response](#) for your dog before they actually go in there and get another exam. Now, if that professional says, "no, you got to, you know, show 'em who's boss you got to alpha roll 'em you got to do whatever."

Now, highly unlikely at a Vet's office. But if it happens just again, go to that internal dialogue, they're just trying to be helpful. "Thank you for your input. I'm working with a professional and you know, this is a journey that we've been on a while, and I would like it to go in the direction that we are now headed."

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What you don't want to do, is you don't want to hand your dog over to another dog trainer or a somebody giving a workshop or even a Veterinarian to 'deal with'.

Even if it's Susan Garrett saying, "let me take your dog", before you give me your dog, ask these questions. What are you hoping to achieve? Is there some reason you don't think you can talk me through that and get the same results? And what is the worst case scenario that could happen to my dog by me handing them?



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Now, if they say, “well if your dog goes to bite me, I'm going to like, you know, pop him off his feet a few times and I'm going to alpha roll him and tell him whose boss”. Chances are, that's not going to happen.

But what you want to do is make sure you set the dog up for a hundred percent success. You are not going to hand your dog over unless you know, it will be a confidence building experience for your dog or at the least, something that is not going to make them fearful of that person or this environment, the next time that they come around.

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And again, go home, “what could I have done to be more proactive?”. And that involves going in and out of the situation, you will take your dog out of the situation. If the dog trainer says, “hey, did you see your dog growl?” And you could say, “yeah, I've been working on that. You know, it's my bad. I put him in a situation he wasn't ready for. I'm just going to play with him, put him up”. And then you can have a discussion about “this is what I'm doing, I'm working on behavior modification. I don't believe in punishing emotions, I don't believe that's going to work.”

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And then ask them, “have you looked into behavior modification? Are you familiar with?” - give them some of the podcasts that we have talking about [emotional responses](#). Help them in a non accusatory way. So, I don't want you to make your instructors feel bad. Or feel like they don't know enough but do it in a way that “this is what I'm doing, I'd love for you and I to be able to talk about this, here's some podcasts that you can listen to”.

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At the very least, but I'm hoping if they're teaching classes - there's a lot of online classes they can take that they can learn more about the application of good behavior modification.

So, there we have it, what you can do, what you shouldn't do, knowing that the best you can do is, create that positive trigger for yourself. Give yourself a way to decompress, detoxify, keeping your confidence up. “Knowing I am on the right path and their criticism of what I'm doing doesn't define myself, my dog, or my relationship with my dog.”

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“This is going to get better. I know it will. I'm going to do better for my dog next time around. Here's how I'm going to be proactive.” You're not going to avoid these situations; you're just going to know what you're going to do. And what are you going to do with your response, that isn't a clap back. You're not going to come back with ego. You're just going to thank people for their input and say, “yeah, I got it, I can change my own tire, got it from here on out.” We'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

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

[Podcast Episode 153: Dog Muzzles: Everything You Need To Know And How To Muzzle Train Dogs](#)

[YouTube Video - Vet Visits For Dogs: How To Create A Positive Experience For Everyone](#)

[YouTube Playlist: The Emotional State of Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)



# Unsolicited Dog Training Advice: How To Protect Your Confidence And Your Dog

### 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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