

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG A common request for this podcast that we get, especially in the summer is “How on earth can I stop my dog from barking in the car while I'm driving?” And you can see the dilemma because you're driving and can't like train, right? Well, believe it or not you can fix that. And that's the topic of today's podcast.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. First thing we want to do is diagnose as good as we can why the dog is barking because there's likely a good reason. The first thing we want to eliminate, is it fear? Is your dog hovering like on the bottom of the car or if they're crated at the back of their crate, are they hovering back there and with obvious signs of fear?

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If that's the case, go to [podcast number 75](#) and work on counterconditioning and desensitizing the thought of going in a car, the experience of driving in a car. So, fear definitely you don't want to continue to have a dog drive if they are fearful of driving. Now you're gonna say “No, my dog is not fearful.”

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So, one of the best things you could do is take a short trip and set up a video camera to capture what the dog is barking at or are they just randomly barking. More than likely your dog is barking in anticipation of something or at the site of something. So those are two separate things. If your dog is barking because of the [barrier frustration](#), “Uh, there's another dog out there.”, “There's a person out there.”, “There's cars going by.” You need to just diagnose.

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Is that what they're barking at? Are they bouncing from window to window? Are they looking at four things to bark at? Or are you taking them somewhere and they're really super excited about it. Those are two separate things that we need to work through.

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Now with any kind of dog training problem, there's three things you can do. One is do what you've been doing. Just hope it gets better. And if you have this problem, you know it doesn't get better. It just actually gets much, much worse. They start to anticipate more and more, and the barking kind of goes into a hysteria. So, let's just say that's not an option.

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Number two, you could manage. And number three, you could educate. Now education more often than not takes on the form of management plus. So, let's go through what are the things that you can do if you are going to manage. So, refer to [podcast number 164](#). How is your dog driving in a car? Because if they're bouncing from window to window the most obvious solution number one is to restrain them either in a crate or a seatbelt. If your dog is barking, crate idea is much, much better because you can eliminate the dog from seeing whatever it is that stimulates them; if they're just barking because of things outside of the car.



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Now, this isn't true for dogs barking from excitement. We will get to that. Alright. So, if the dog is barking at triggers outside of the car, then that video camera is going to tell you what is that trigger. "Oh, it's motorcycles." "That dog's crazy about motorcycles." "Okay. Let's go and fix that." Or it's only other dogs or it's only gray cats or what is it that triggers the dog when they see it outside the window that you are going to say, "Alright, we've narrowed it down and we can fix that."

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Another part of the management is can you just put a big meaty bone in the crate with the dog. And then they're so busy chewing on that. They're learning to be quiet in the car when you're driving. The same goes with something like a stuffed Toppl. You can put that in with them. And does that eliminate?

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If the dog is barking from excitement and anticipation chances are that's not gonna cut it. They're going to still be excited. Now for some dogs if they're crazy about bones it might tone it down. And that's what we want. We want the elimination of the rehearsals. Alright. So, write that down. Your number one goal is to eliminate the rehearsals of the undesired behavior.

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So, if you've said "we're gonna fix this" then number one, let's not let it happen again right now while we're working to fix it. Okay. So, if you have two dogs and they get excited and they bark and they play and they get excited with each other, what you can do is take them out on separate drives with your video camera setup. You know what, just duct tape your iPhone somewhere in the back if you have to.

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Let's say, is it one dog more so than the other, then that's the dog you're gonna work on first. The one that is the bigger instigator, that's the one that you're gonna work on first. So, we've done what we can to manage. The last thing you can do and if your dog is in a crate, you can cover that crate with a blanket that they can't see what's going on. If that's not an option, you can black out all of the windows. But I want to warn you; you need to investigate the laws of your state because a lot of times that could be illegal. You know chances are it's not, but I'm giving you that warning to check it out first.

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You want the dog to not have access to looking out anywhere. That includes the front window, but my suggestion is do not black out that front window while you're driving. Alright. It could be problematic. So easy solution to that just put a bungee across the back and just hang a blanket between you and your dog.

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I'd actually do two blankets because then you can open up and reward quiet and close. Okay. So now we've found a way to manage, does that eliminate the barking? Guess what, it may not. I dealt with a student's dog who barked only at stoplights. Fine while we're driving but barking at stoplights, crazy. So, you got to know what that [trigger](#) is first.

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Now we need a way for you to reinforce when we get that good behavior. So, three things that you can do. Number one, have somebody drive around in the back seat with you that they can reward your dog.



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Often times the dog's not gonna bark when that person's back there because they're learning, this is the person that has the cookies, or they're just distracted by the person. So that's not really that practical, but it's a great way to start just to do what I said. Our most important thing is, eliminate those rehearsal. Number two you can do is invest in a [remote feeder](#). Now you can go online and get used remote feeders really, really reasonably priced. So that's a great option.

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Now when you're doing this you've got to be not in rush hour traffic. Just driving in an area that's not very busy that you can just hit that button to give the dog cookies. The third option is you have a bucket full of dog treats in the front seat. If you've got curtains set up, open the curtains, say "Easter biscuits", throw a handful of cookies back there and the dog can do some searching while you are driving.

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Again, that not only is a reinforcement for quiet but they're busy searching for Easter biscuits or AKA cookies. And they are quiet. Alright. So, we need a way to reinforce that. Alright. Now there is a chance we may punish. "Susan Garrett's telling me to punish?" Yes, I am. Let's review what is the criteria for punishment and what do I mean by punishment. Because it's probably not what you think.

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Criteria if I'm going to punish. Now how am I going to punish more often than not I am using negative punishment. And that is I'm taking away that which is the dog is getting reinforced by. Negative punishment in this case number one I will only use with a history of a lot of reinforcement for that which is correct.

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So, the big mistake people make with negative punishment is they just start taking the dog away from whatever it is that they're barking at or whatever it is that they're doing. And there's never been a reinforcement for what they should be doing. So, it's very conflicting, often shuts the dog down. Very frustrating.

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So, punishment should never happen unless you can say this environment is rich with reinforcement for the correct behavior. So, what is that correct behavior? I want you to hang out in your crate or hang out in your seatbelt and not make a peep.

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And you can say, "Well Susan, I can't get that." We'll get to that. Alright. So, number one if you're gonna use negative punishment, it's got to be the dog knows that there is a behavior they can be doing that will earn them reinforcement. And the second part of using negative punishment, you use it once and then you evaluate, did you get a behavior change?

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If not then guess what, it's ineffective so why keep going. Every time you use any form of punishment always is it rich with reinforcement of what the dog should be doing and after every application did the dog change the behavior? How long did that behavior change happen? And if it wasn't long and if you didn't see a change, stop punishing.



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Okay. Now, what am I talking about when I say we could punish in this case? I'm not saying you're going to be you know, like my dad driving when we were in the backseat, and he would like kind of lean back and kind of like try to swat at us while we were fighting with each other in the backseat. I'm not talking about that.

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I'm talking about taking away that which is reinforcing for the dog. So, if the dog's anticipating going to the park and you drive and they start screaming, then I just pull over and stop and read a book. Guess what, the screaming's gonna go away. But that's not your first line of defense. That is once you've done everything else, here's what you're going to do.

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Not be in a hurry to get somewhere that's for sure. Okay. So, what are we gonna have to do? We need to counter condition and desensitize this dog. So, if the dog is triggered by something, let's say it's another dog. Then you've got to narrow down where that triggering happens. Is that dog triggered when they're just hanging out with you on a park bench?

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Nope, doesn't happen. Only happens in the car. Okay, great. Go and park the car somewhere where you can be far away from other dogs and just reinforce for the dog doing nothing. And they're gonna go, "Okay. This is cool. I don't—I just get cookies for nothing." And gradually you move your car every chance you get when you're doing this.

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Closer and further and closer and further until the dog can be around other dogs. Look at the dog walking by the car and go, "Yeah, this means I get cookies." That's what we want to do. Go back and listen to [some of the podcasts](#) here on counter conditioning and desensitization, because this is not an overnight process my friend. You have to be patient. But it is possible. You will get results.

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Now, what about the dogs that are over excited or they're anticipating they're going somewhere that they're really excited about. This one, what you need to do is pick up your car keys and when does the excitement happen? Did the chaos happen in the house?

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Put down your car keys, go about your business. You've got to then be able to pick up your car keys and have the dogs not be triggered into hysteria. Start giving that reinforcement so that you can pick up your car keys, maybe put your keys on a different key fob so that it doesn't make the same noise. Put your keys in a sock. So, you're now picking up a sock to start some place to get good behavior.

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And you want to continue doing this until you can pick up the cars, walk— [Pick up the cars? Okay, if you're picking up cars, you're impressing me right now.] Pick up your car keys and walk outside. Dogs get hysterical, we're back inside. Here's where [Crate Games](#) comes in guys. I open the door and the dogs know they have a behavior to do. And then I would reinforce them at the threshold of my door. So, then I say, "with me" and they're walking with me towards the car.



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And if your dogs don't know how to hang out in [Reinforcement Zone](#), which is beside you when you're walking, then I strongly encourage you to consider our [Recallers](#) program, which will help a lot with that.

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So, I want my dogs to just be chill. And you might have to do these 10 or 15 times a day. "Well Susan, [how do I exercise my dogs](#) in the meantime?" You're gonna have to come up with something else. Right. You can't be taking the dogs in the car and letting them go cray cray and then say "Okay, one session. I'm going to train you not to do that."

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Do you see that if you eat a salad for lunch once a day, but you have chocolate chip cookies for every other meal all week long your weight loss problem is gonna be ineffective? Same goes for counterconditioning and desensitization. It's got to be the removal of the trigger and the conditioning of some other behavior.

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Alright, we're gonna work up till we can get the dogs in the car and you're gonna feed them their meals in there for the next little while. Alright. So, they might get excited about that. "Oh my God it's food time and I'm getting in the car!" Right. You might have to do the same thing with that. That this is just white noise.

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"Yep, we're getting the car. That's cool." You're gonna back down the driveway, back up the driveway, or you might just be sitting in your car reading a book and they're going, "Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh!" And you just wait until they chill. "Why? Why haven't you started the car?" Then you're gonna start the car. If they go "Oh, my gosh. Oh my gosh." you turned the car off.

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You see how you progress to the point where you can go down the driveway, up the driveway, down the driveway, up the driveway, round the block, back in the driveway, round the block the other way. And then you head off. Now if you're lucky your dog might just go cray cray when you get to like a certain click in the pavement that triggers that the pond is next.

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So, what you're gonna do is drive by the click and drive by the pond and not go in for probably like a week until you minimize the hysteria. You might do Easter biscuits before you get to that click so that they're busy so that they don't even realize the click is happening.

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All of these strategies are meant to change your dog's focus or most of the time it's not even a conscious thought. It's a conditioned behavior, the click means 'I get to swim soon'. Right.

And so, we have to use counter conditioning to remove that. It's not "Oh, I hear a click. That means the park is coming." It's conditioning. It's not conscious on their part. Their body is saying "We get to swim soon!" So, counter conditioning is what's gonna fix it.



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Okay. So, you need to identify by a diagnostic, a video is great. Is your dog fearful? Is it excitement? Is it anticipation? Is it barrier frustration? And then you're going to use a targeted approach to diffuse any one of those situations.

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I would love for you then to come back here to the podcast and share with me just step one. "I did step one, and these are the results I got." Now come on over to YouTube, you can drop it in the comment section on YouTube and my team and myself we check back in there and if this needs more follow up on my part, I'd be happy to do it. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 75: Stop Motion Sickness: Helping Your Puppy or Dog Love the Car](#)

[Podcast Episode 88: Barrier Frustration: Help for Fence Fighting, Leash Reactivity and Window Guarding](#)

[Podcast Episode 164: The Danger Of Car Travel For Dogs: Evaluating Your Risk](#)

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

[Remote Feeder: PetSafe Treat & Train](#)

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

[Crate Games](#)

[YouTube Video: Understanding Your Dog's Reinforcement Zone \(RZ\) with Susan Garrett](#)

[Recallers](#)

[YouTube Video: 15 Ways To Exercise Your Dog](#)



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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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