

Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG In podcast [episode number 167](#) I talked about how you can set up your training so that you can avoid unnecessary stress or anxiety for your dog. And today I'm following up that episode by sharing how you can replace your dog's stress, anxiety, or reactivity with some good old-fashion confidence.

00:00:30

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. I have got a lot to pack into today's podcast, but nothing more important than what I have upfront. And that is there's two things that are super important about helping dogs who are stressed or anxious, or maybe [are reactive](#). Number one is it's your mindset because when you have a dog that you know is a little bit worried in certain environments or the opposite.

00:01:03

They get a little bit out of control and they like lunge at people because they want to meet them, and they bark and want to chase skateboarders and it looks like they're trying to eat them, and they really don't they're just super friendly and_. Or you have a dog that has moved from super friendly and maybe has grown a little bit reactive to those skateboarders.

00:01:21

So, wherever you are with your dog, there now is some anxiety in you because of what the history of your dog has built in you and the thought that that might happen again. But more importantly the reaction to the people that are around when it happens. And you might hear things like "Do you really think you should have a dog like that out at the park?" or "You should get a good trainer for that dog." or "That dog is a complete a-hole. I can't believe you're not correcting that dog." Or other unsolicited advice that I spoke about in podcast [episode number 163](#).

00:02:00

And what happens to you? Number one, you're embarrassed. Number two, you feel a little bit of shame. Number three, you know your dog's a good dog. You know these people are misunderstanding him. So, then there's a little bit of guilt because you're feeling bad that you didn't show up for your dog or you didn't put in the training to get the dog to a better place.

00:02:24

So, there's some regrets about how you've trained and "oh, I bet Susan Garrett could have done a better job and I bet you, you know, people wouldn't talk about you if you lived with somebody else." All of that is not good for you and it certainly isn't good for your dog. And it's un-freaking necessary. It's not your fault but I don't want you to feel like a victim.

00:02:50

I want to turn you into a victor tonight. Because in order for us to bring out the best in our dog, number one we've got to think the best of our dog. And number two, we've got to think the best of ourselves. We have to believe that me as that dog's owner can bring out the best. So, number one, do you believe that your dog can be amazing?



Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1

00:03:09

Like you know, I spoke about this on a recent live. If I knocked on your door today and said, "Hey, I'd like to show up every day at five o'clock in the afternoon and train your dog for you. Is that alright?" Would you say no? Now, if I said "I'm gonna do that for like six months, do you think your dog, you'd see a difference in your dog?" Of course, right?

Because I've seen and helped train tens of thousands of dogs, there is no problem that is going to put me off. And so, alright we've checked number one. You can believe in your dog in what's possible. What we have to do is help you to believe in yourself. Now, the first thing that we have to do, next time your neighborhood garbage day rolls around, it might be this week, it might be next.

What I want you to do when you're putting out the trash, I want you just imagine you are zipping open your chest. You're reaching into your heart. You're taking out any guilt, shame, regrets, embarrassment, low self-esteem, that people's reactions have put there, and I want you to you know polish up that old heart of yours and tie up that bag nice and tight and let's kick it to the curb, my friend

00:04:22

Because let me just give you an example. We all are working on stuff with our dogs. So, some people, God bless them, have gone out and got a [rescue dog that may have had some bad upbringing](#) and may end up with some fear or confidence issues. And so that is what you are working on.

Yeah, you're teaching your dog tricks and stuff, but you're really working on helping him to be more comfortable when you go out in public and when he sees some of his triggers. Now there's other people who have got their first Golden Retriever that they have got entered in [their first agility trial](#). Both of you for the last few years have been working on your stuff.

00:05:03

Both of you are doing the best you can. And here on Saturday you both go out to the park. Now, your dog barks and lunges at a skateboarder and you get told off. This person's Golden Retriever goes in the agility ring, and she wasn't really prepared the way she should have. So, the dog runs amuck, goes off course, knocks some bars, comes out of the ring.

There's nobody saying "How dare you come to an agility trial with such a poorly trained dog. You should never show up at this park again. Why would you bring that dog here?" Because society accepts that our tricks, our agility, our you know, Frisbee dogs aren't gonna be perfect all the time. But society thinks everybody's dog is [Lassie finding Timmy in the well](#). That you have done a bad job.

00:06:04

If you failed, you've done a bad job. If you fail at agility, "Oh man, that was a headache, wasn't it?" But if you failed with your dog's confidence then your dog's an a-hole and you're a bit of a jerk for bringing him out. You've got to let go of that, guys.

That's not serving you. You have got to let that go. Because I want you to see your dog the way you see your dog in your living room.

You love that dog. I want you to see that dog everywhere you go. Yes, we have to manage our dog's behavior. Yes, we have to make sure that we can keep them under threshold. Yes, we have to help grow their confidence. But I give you permission to always look at your dog the way you do on their best days. And if somebody comes up and tries to give you advice on it just say, "Hey, we're out here doing the best we can."



Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1

00:06:57

"We're learning from Susan Garrett. And I know we're far from perfect, but we have come so far, and I hope you can just be patient with me as I try and help my dog have the best life possible." I don't know that top of mind, just whatever doesn't put you in a conversation with them. "I'd love to talk to you, but really my dog needs me."

00:07:19

Okay. Believe in your dog. Believe in yourself. Okay. Now I got some help for you. I've got a list that I put together for you. It was gonna be like your five most important things and then it grew to be 'okay, your top 10'. And I'm not gonna tell you the number now because you might turn away. Number one, we have to create clarity. Because our goal is to create confidence to replace that anxiety in the dog.

So, it doesn't matter if the dog is getting worried or they're going cray cray, we have to give them clarity. Because you know what your dog will do when they're overwhelmed. Do you know what—I know what I do when I'm overwhelmed. We know what our dogs will do. They'll either you know, go crazy and start trying to run and do the zoomies and, or they withdraw, and they look a little bit frightened.

00:08:07

So, we want to never see that in your training. You've got to make sure that you're training with clarity. And if you're somebody who's using food lures or props to train your dog, you should never do that - not even once - without a plan of how you're going to fade those props or lures. Because the more you lure a dog or use props, the more the behavior stays with the food lures or those props.

So, you want to, if you want to use food lures— now if you've been listening to me, you know that I don't use food lure in my training. If you want to do that then you've got to get rid of them quickly and start growing the behavior with reinforcement, that comes after the dog has offered you a response not before. We want to grow that behavior because that helps grow the dog's confidence because they're making the choices, not following lures.

00:09:02

Okay. So, we've got to create clarity by having a plan if you're using food lures before it ever starts, how are we gonna get rid of them. Number two, take any behavior you want to train and break it down into small pieces and just focus on growing that one piece and your dog's gonna be happy and "Oh, that was super!" "That was easy! Now what else is there?"

So, if we wanted the dog to walk beside us on leash, if you go to podcast [episode number 76](#), I talked about a few games that you can use to help create confidence with these dogs.

And so, take walking on a loose leash. Like people put the leash on the puppy and expect that they're gonna walk beside them. How about in your living room? You just give the dog a reason to want to be beside you. We want our dog to be seen on our seam, right? So, you know they don't have to be glued to your seam but somewhere in arms distance length from the— and I like to you know, shape that with [Perch Work \(Pivots and Spins\)](#). It's another video you find on YouTube.

Alright. So, break those down. But you're not gonna go walking at the beach where the dog's gonna have all these distractions until you've split that up and let the dog know how to get into position, how to turn their butt around, how where you want their head to be and et cetera, et cetera. So, there's lots of little layers.



Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1

00:10:14

So, break things down. My mentor Bob Bailey always says, "Be a splitter not a lumper." Okay. Next, we want to inoculate your dog to being stressed after failure. Alright.

Now a lot of people say, "Oh, we never want our dogs to fail so we're gonna just make sure that we grow behaviors in a way that they never make a mistake."

It is possible to grow behaviors with a dog never failing. But what we're doing is we're never allowing the dog to experience failure. So, what's gonna happen if they fail?

Because sometimes you might not be perfect as a trainer. Things might go wrong. The dog doesn't get the reinforcement that they expect.

00:10:52

So, I like to get that inoculation to failure early and where it's so overwhelmingly desirable to keep going, your dog's not going to give up. So, [my game ItsYerChoice](#), I'll leave a link in the show notes.

It's the best game to help a dog fail, fail fast, fail forward, get ready for the next one, because they're failing in the presence of something they love.

Okay. So, inoculate your dog to failing by building in small failures that they don't mind, they can recover from fast because it's not about failing. It's about recovering and moving on in your work.

Number four, in [podcast number 86](#) I talked about the arousal curve. And so, if you remember the arousal curve dogs at the far-right end are over aroused.

00:11:42

So, they can't think straight. They can't listen. They're just so excited. And we need those dogs to bring them into their zone of genius so that they can perform at their peak.

Dogs at the other end, they're under aroused. They're like, "Yeah, I don't really need to do anything today." So, we need to get them more excited.

So, there's games for both. There's triggers that we need to build into both of those dogs. But you're not gonna do it unless you have an awareness.

So, if you just, if you're used to like, "Oh my dog is on the couch." "Hey, let's go do some training." and you just start you know, giving them cookies.

You're gonna be blown away by how much better your dog will be when you start building an arousal state first and then start training. I call it relationship building.

But really, it's about creating focus by changing the dog physiology. Number five, and I am gonna stop here. We're gonna have to do another podcast to go through some more of these.

Number five, believe and learn from the dog. When we're training, we're giving our dogs information and they're giving us feedback on what they learned, and you have to believe them.

00:12:51

So, if you go out for the night and you come home and you see a big old hole chewed in the middle of your living room couch and you get like you flip out. "What did you do?!" "What an a-hole you are."

That means your expectation for your dog's behavior was here. "I'm going out for the night and you're just going to chill on the couch."



00:13:17

“You're just going to be you know, it doesn't matter that I didn't get a chance to walk you today.” “It doesn't matter that there were some kids knocking on the door and screaming and getting you all anxious. It doesn't matter.” “This was my expectation. This is your capability that you showed me tonight.” Now that gap, the gap is where your frustration comes in with your dog. And it's completely unnecessary.

If you believe your dog when your dog says, “Uh, this is my best, you see that?” “What you're seeing right here. That's my best, yeah.” “Your best is chewing a hole in my freaking thousand dollars couch?” “That's the best I can give you in the environment with the education I've got right now.”

00:14:06

And so, mind shift for you. Believe the dog and learn from them. ‘How can I help grow your confidence so that you aren't going to be anxious when I go out?’ or ‘How can I manage your behavior until we can see a change in you.’ And it is possible guys. It is possible. But you have to be patient and you have to be willing, be open to recognizing that that's their best.

We can raise their best through the education we can give them and the different environments that we can put them in to help generalize good behaviors in all environments. But they don't come out of the womb that way. And if you're bringing on a rescue dog then you're bringing on a little bit of baggage and that's okay.

00:14:54

Because it's the best they can do with that baggage they've got, and it will get better. Going back to the beginning of this podcast, it's about your belief in your dog. And if you believe in your dog, you're gonna do what you need to, to grow your understanding so that you can bring out the best in your dog.

00:15:12

More on this in our next podcast episode. I'll see you next time here on Shaped by Dog.

ItsYerChoice Game:

[Learn how to play ItsYerChoice \(IYC\)](#)

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 167: Reduce Your Dog's Stress And Anxiety In Training](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Reactive or Aggressive Dogs: Key Insights with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 163: Unsolicited Dog Training Advice: How To Protect Your Confidence And Your Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 78: How to Train a Rescue Dog with Behavior Problems](#)

[Podcast Episode 114: Dog Agility Training: 3 Big Mistakes All Dog Owners Should Avoid](#)

[Podcast Episode 3: How Hollywood Made Life Tough For Dogs](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 86: How to Train Unmotivated or Overexcited Dogs](#)



Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1

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.



Meet Us Online

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

