

Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG If you've been around dogs for a while or if you're brand new, you may have heard people say, "You know, all dogs can't be trained the same way. That different dogs need different methods." And that's a topic of today's podcast.

00:00:25

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett, welcome to Shaped by Dog. And welcome to podcast episode number 193, which means in seven podcasts we are going to be at podcast number 200! I bet you're great at math, and I bet you figured that one out before I even said 200. We're going to have a big event to celebrate our 200th episode, and I'm going to do a live event.

00:00:49

There's going to be jugglers. Okay maybe I'll juggle. And for sure we're going to have some great giveaways from some of our sponsors, so stay tuned. You won't want to miss this event happening when we hit podcast episode number 200.

Okay, let's talk about why people might think that different dogs need different methods of dog training.

00:01:11

And you'll often hear people say that, "You can't train all dogs the same." And I feel sorry for first time dog trainers because they may misunderstand what that means when people will say, "Oh, not all training methods will work for all dogs." Let me just clarify. Animals, you, me, your dog, a mouse in your house, a cat, a parrot, all animals are governed by the laws of learning.

And it doesn't change. When people say different dogs may require different methods, you need to understand they're talking more about their belief that different dogs require different philosophies. And I don't agree with that.

00:02:01

So, what is a dog training philosophy? Well, my [dog training philosophy is one of kindness](#). That I believe all dogs can be brilliant for whatever it is you want them to be brilliant for, all through playing interactive games, giving the dog clarity through choice. That's the basic philosophy in a nutshell.

Now, do I believe in punishment? Now again, splitting hairs, turning your back on a dog when they jump up or dropping a cookie, that's punishment. If you dropped a cookie and the dog didn't get it when they expected it, by the true definition that is punishment.

00:02:40

So, when I talk about punishment, I'm talking about [positive punishment](#) meaning applying a correction to a dog via a collar. If people are using a correction or punishment, it's from a collar or a pop on a collar or maybe an electric collar.

Some people throw things at dogs. I think using punishment that the dog can't predict is I think really more psychologically damaging to the dog.



Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

00:03:09

But I won't get into that because does my philosophy involve the intentional use of positive punishment? No, it does not. And so, my philosophy is all dogs of all breeds of all problems can be reached through the use of positive reinforcement and giving that dog the freedom of choice, the freedom to choose what they want. Now, there's so much more, and the way I just said that somebody can say, "Oh yeah, let's just let our dogs, you know, [take food off the table](#)."

00:03:42

That's not what I'm saying, because the number one thing that your success is dependent upon no matter what philosophy you choose is the clarity of your expectations. And as my mentor Bob Bailey says, "The expectations on us should be higher than the expectations we have on our dogs."

Meaning if our dogs fail, we have to look at us. That is a philosophy. I don't believe that a novice handler running their herding breed in agility and they're giving the dog very vague cues and the dog starts nipping, I don't believe that dog needs to be punished. Honestly, I don't.

00:04:18

Now let's be clear. There's a lot of force free trainers who say punishment doesn't work. Horsefeathers. Punishment. There are certain laws to learning. Punishment works. The decision for you, the listener, is does the end justify the means? And for me, it absolutely doesn't.

00:04:34

So, when people say different dogs need different methods, I don't believe that different dogs need different philosophies. Do different dogs need different techniques? If you're saying by methods, approaches, techniques, 100% yes.

Different dogs need different approaches. And potentially the approach might need to be changed based on the limitations of the handler, but different dogs even within the breed, I've often mentioned the difference in my Border Collies that are all related.

00:05:12

So, Swagger and Momentum, pretty similar in how I train them. But my young puppy, This!, I had to train with a different approach.

Why? Because if you go to [podcast episode number 189](#) where I talked about the seven things that influence behavior, my training is one of them, but I had to spend a lot of time working on those other things.

And my training approach had to be slightly different, in that with Swagger for example, there would be a lot of calming games. My training would be done with less verbal enthusiasm from me versus This! who generally is a much lower drive dog. She needs a lot more jacking up, a lot more excitement.

00:05:59

Much more quick short sessions and a longer time in between training to just, she used to just fall into the deepest sleep after a training session. Where Swagger would be running around the house with his toy, very stimulated saying "When can we do that again?"

So, dogs need different approaches based on who they are, but they don't need different philosophies from you. It's super important because we're all governed by the laws of learning. The laws of effect. Reinforcement does build behavior. That's a law of effect.



Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

00:06:35

Associations happen with dogs either operantly through them voluntarily doing something, getting a consequence they like, and seeking to repeat that operant behavior. Or classically through involuntarily doing something and it having a response that conditions a behavior in the dog.

So, there are laws, it's not going to change. So, I want to share this with you because if somebody says to you that, "The laws of dog training are that the dog must be subservient, that you must be a pack leader, that the dog must respect you." Those aren't laws.

00:07:17

Those are somebody else's guidelines based on their philosophy. And that's okay. You can have your own guidelines. But the truth is for a lot of people, they're drawn to [the way I train](#) because of their moral compass and the kind of relationship they want with their dog.

And even if they were at a trainer that said, "You [must be dominant](#) and when your dog challenges you, you must alpha roll them." They wouldn't be successful with that because innately, they're drawn to this, not that.

00:07:52

And so, the method you choose really is a philosophy based on who you are and the kind of relationship you want with your dog.

And the truth is, dog training stayed at a pretty, what I would call, and this is a judgment, a dark place for probably a hundred years. Where dogs were treated like animals, like they didn't have a soul, and they didn't have the right to an opinion, and they sure as heck weren't ever given a choice.

Often trained just by avoiding the pain of punishment. That was their reinforcement, was "If you do things the way I tell you, you won't be punished."

00:08:34

Now, there was a very, very slow evolution but even when I became a professional dog trainer in the late Eighties, it was still unheard of to do some of the things that I decided I wanted to try, and particularly in dog sports. And I competed in the sport of dog obedience and fly ball and dog agility. When I would say, "I want to do this little game." People would say, "You're going to ruin your dog."

00:09:00

Or they would say, "That might work for Susan Garrett because she's such a good dog trainer, but that won't work for anybody else." Well, the things that people were saying would only work for Susan Garrett now are just a recognized common approach to training something like weave poles or a seesaw.

So, there has been an exponential rate of growth in dog training since that time, since the late Eighties, 30 plus years ago. But we're still relatively new in our growth. So, when somebody says, "You can't do that with just reinforcement." Or, "I could get there better with punishment."

00:09:40

You know what? They might be correct. That there are things we are still learning. But I promise you, I promise you, if there is something that can be achieved with more clarity, and potentially more kindness to the dog, if you just punish them, then that would keep us locked in a cycle where we are constantly turning to punishment to fix that, whatever that is. And we all would be back in the Eighties.



Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

00:10:13

If it wasn't for me willing to say, "I'm going to risk the success I've had now for the chance to have as much success or potentially more doing things in a way that [aligns my heart with my dogs](#)."

And I was willing to take that chance because I knew I could always go back to what I used to know. And if you are listening to this and you choose to be a trainer that uses punishment, first of all, thank you. Thank you for feeling safe to listen to this podcast and not be shamed or judged because of the way that you are training.

00:10:54

But if you choose to use punishment, I want to challenge you. That it's hard to grow when you won't look outside what you deem is the only way to do things. And so, I want to challenge you that even if this has worked for a hundred dogs, even if it's worked for a thousand dogs, I know without a shadow of a doubt in 20 years, in 50 years and in a hundred years, punishment at some point, the use of positive punishment in dog training will be just a mark in a history book.

00:11:34

And so, I challenge you to get ahead, to get ahead of the curve to say, "Okay, I know how I used to do things. I'm going to try things differently." And that's what years ago, there was a woman by the name of Debbie Zappia who was giving seminars in the sport of, I'm going to get this wrong, IPO or Schutzhund, and you know the name's changed quite a bit.

00:11:56

And Debbie came to a seminar I was giving at Cornell University and she at that time, trained her dogs, and I will tell you, her dogs worked as animated and as joyful and as engaged with her as any dog I've ever seen. Yet she conditioned these dogs to work on a shock collar from eight weeks on up. Eight-week-old puppies or ten-week-old puppies, she conditioned them to a shock collar, and she trained with what a lot of people would look at "this is very punishing."

00:12:30

And I just want to say it can be effective, and there are a lot more people like Debbie Zappia that use punishment in their training. And their dogs have brilliant drive and motivation.

So those people who say it's not possible, the challenge that I have with it for every one trainer that has the gift of recognizing their dog's behavior, the gift of anticipating what their dog might do, and the timeliness of adding a swift, and deliberate, and timely punishment so that the dog gets the feedback, changes their behavior, and doesn't lose their joy for work.

00:13:09

For every one trainer like Debbie Zappia, there is thousands, maybe tens of thousands of pet owners trying to learn it and their dogs are paying the price. Now, Debbie Zappia came to me after that seminar and said, "I would like you to help me with this dog that I bought." And I think I've told the story of Debbie Zappia on a [previous podcast](#).

So, the long story short, is that she was willing to give up what she knew, what it brought her. She was already a world team member, the U.S. World team member in the sport. But she took this dog that nobody wanted because he was deemed like too soft, and she used some of my methodology. And she went on to become vice champion of the world with that dog.



Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

00:13:58

And so, I applaud people like her. And from that point of view, I wanted to do this podcast to let you all know, two meanings of this podcast. Number one, I want to challenge those of you who are using punishment in your training, know that you're welcome here.

You're welcome here to question or to have a respectful dialogue with me about what maybe you should be doing, or you could be doing.

00:14:20

I'm not going to tell you what you should be doing. You only you can tell you that. But that we all have our own confirmation bias and so we all, you know, like you drive out of the car lot with that brand new Toyota Sienna, and all of a sudden everybody in your city has driving a Toyota Sienna. How did that happen?

00:14:39

It happened because your beliefs have changed because you now drive that car and so you're on the lookout to look for that car. Just like if you believe that reinforcement training doesn't work, your confirmation bias will have you scanning your city for opportunities to point fingers at "See? I told you it doesn't work. Look how flawed this methodology is."

00:15:03

And I've spoken about [the belief loop](#) so many times in this podcast. That that belief is what creates our thoughts, and our thoughts creates our emotions, which gives our actions, which gets the outcomes that we have.

And so to change that belief loop, you have to challenge your beliefs, which I'm asking you to do. And I will tell you, I challenge my own all the time, and that's why I'm constantly curious as to what else we can do better as reinforcement-based dog trainers.

00:15:32

So that's the number one reason why I wanted to do this podcast. And the second reason was I want those of you who are out there that are hearing people saying that "not all dogs can be trained with the same method." I want you to know what they mean is their belief is that different dogs need different philosophies, and I don't agree.

Different dogs need different techniques possibly, within that philosophy. So that I'll use the technique of amping a dog up or a technique of calming a dog down. I'll use a technique of using more food with one dog, and I'll use a technique of using more toys with the other.

00:16:15

But the philosophy stays the same, that it's reinforcement based, it's game-based, and it's giving the dog the freedom to choose to be correct. But it's up to me, the expectations on me to manipulate the environment so the desired behavior is the obvious one for the dog.

00:16:35

I hope this makes sense. I hope this isn't just random rambling. I really wanted to share this with you all, and I'd love to get your feedback on it. So come on over to YouTube and while you're here, if you haven't subscribed, please subscribe to the channel.





Episode: #193

Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

00:16:49

You subscribing to the channel is what's going to get this podcast episode shared to a lot of other trainers, ideally trainers that don't agree with [my philosophy](#) so we can have a dialogue.

So, leave me a comment, let me know what you think of it. And also stay tuned, episode number 200 is on the way. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 150: Adding Mindset To Your Dog Training Tools: Who Do You Become?](#)

[Podcast Episode 146: Balanced Dog Training: Does It Really Exist?](#)

[Podcast Episode 33: How Do I Stop My Dog Counter Surfing?!](#)

[Podcast Episode 189: All The Things That Influence Your Dog's Behavior And What Behavior Tells You](#)

[Podcast Episode 176: Why Your Dog's Emotions Are A Critical Element Of Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 46: Is Your Dog Trying To Dominate You And What You Can Do About It](#)

[Podcast Episode 187: When To Listen To Your Heart In Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 175: Food Luring VS Shaping In Dog Training: How Science Changed How I Teach Dogs](#)

[Podcast Episode 8: Get Your Dog In The Belief Loop Of Awesome](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Susan Garrett's Dog Training Philosophy and Training Processes](#)



Do Different Dogs Really Need Different Dog Training Methods?

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>

