



Episode: #202

Getting A Happy Well Behaved Dog With The ABCs Of Training

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Today's podcast is really for my online students, but if you are listening to this podcast, chances are you've been following along with previous episodes, and I consider you in our community of online students. And so, this podcast is for you.

And it's to answer the question, "Susan, how do I get what you get?"

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And that's a question that I get occasionally from people, "Hey, I'm playing the games but how do I get what you get?" My personal belief is that success in anything in life comes down to habits.

So, if you look at the habits of somebody who owns a very poorly-behaved dog, you're going to see that there's some key differences between that and the habits of somebody who owns a well-trained dog. Because success leaves clues, and success in anything really is about habits.

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People can say, "But Susan, I'm playing my games." But think about it this way, if you wanted to be in really good shape and you don't really want to exercise any more than you are and you don't want to eat a clean diet because you really like the way that you're eating, but you're willing to maybe have a salad with your meal once a day.

That is a really good habit, but it has no hope of bringing you success of being in really great shape in the midst of all of those other habits that are derailing your plans to be in really good shape. The same is true for anything in life. Success leaves clues.

So, let's look at the habits that will lead you to having success with your dog.

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And with dog training I'm going to bring in a little bit of science but it really is about the antecedent arrangements that we have for our dogs. And that simply means [how the environment is set up to reinforce what behaviors](#).

The [antecedents](#), it describes the environment that the dog is in, and that environment will dictate the behavior of the dog.

For example, you want to lose weight, but you've got 50 different flavors of ice cream in your fridge. That environment won't always lead to the right choices.

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And so if you had a puppy and you were trying to get them to come when they're called and you've got a couple recalls in the living room, and then you try to go to a bunny farm, the antecedent arrangement at the bunny farm with bunnies racing all over and maybe other [dogs chasing those bunnies](#), is going to have the [puppy make a poor choice](#) than they would've in the antecedent arrangement of your kitchen or your living room, when there's just you and the puppy.



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Does that make sense to you? So, we're going to do a deep dive into what those antecedent arrangements currently are in your life and how they can be tweaked so that you can get the success that you want. But it is more than just about playing a game in isolation because all behaviors are either growing or eroding.

So, you may have said, "I taught that recall when he was six months old." But if you aren't present to what happens with that recall, like maybe he had this great head whip in any environment and then it became a great head whip in your backyard or maybe in your house. But when he was at the beach, the head whip was gone, and it took a couple of really screaming calls to get him to stop chasing the waves or chasing the other dogs.

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And if you aren't present to the first time that happens, the first time the antecedent arrangement caused the dog to make a choice other than the one you wanted, then what's going to happen is that's the first step to the erosion of your recall.

So, you might be saying, "Oh no, Susan. Susan, you don't get it. It's the breed of dog I have. My breed of dog." Or, "I've got a rescue dog and he already came with this baggage of things that lead him to make really, really poor choices." Or, "It's my life. I don't have a facility like yours, Susan. So, there's no way I could possibly have a dog as well trained as yours."

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Well, that is a story that has kept you where you are today. We all have a story. My story has put me where I am today. If I want something different for my life, I have to be willing to step outside the comfort of that story.

And I don't mean to be insulting, but we can live in the safety of being a victim, which means we don't have to change because we can set it up for our mind that there's no possible way we could have any other outcome than what we've got because we have a rescue dog, because we have a hound, because we live in a city and we don't have access to fancy facilities. So those may be truths, but they don't need to be the reason for the results you're getting.

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So, you can be a victim or you can be an action taker. It's all about the hat you're putting on your head, [the lens you're seeing your life through](#). And an action taker means you have hope. I believe in you. It's time you believed in you. I believe in what's possible for your dog. And I know even if you get 10% of this right, you're still going to have a better outcome than you did yesterday. I promise you that.

So, if you look at a dog's weekly time, and we'll break the dog's time in a whole week, the time that dog spends into eight zones. The first four zones would be zones I think antecedents are kind of set up, so the dog is really not going to learn behaviors that are undesired. It's possible, but you'll see what I mean.

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For example, zone one, when the dog's sleeping. It's possible that the dog could learn some undesired behaviors by maybe waking you up in the middle of the night and getting you to feed them. Yes, but if you've listened to any of the podcasts here, I bet that's not going to happen. Especially [podcast number 26](#), Don't Wake the Mama.



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So, zone one, the time when the dog is sleeping, antecedents aren't leading to anything other than sleep. Zone two, time when the dog's eating. Now yes, the dog could be doing behaviors like grabbing a mouthful, running up on the couch, and eating their food on the back of your couch.

There could be things, but again, I'm counting on you being present to those behaviors that we get a dog that just eats their food.

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Zone three is going to be alone time. That could be alone time when you're in the house or alone time when you're not in the house. And the dog might be just chilling on a bed or chilling on your couch. The dog might be chewing on a bone, but they're basically keeping themselves entertained, and not finding inappropriate ways to reinforce himself.

So again, I put an asterisk there, because if your dog is staring at the front window and screaming and aggressing towards dogs, or people, or delivery people, that are coming to your home, that is setting up an antecedent that is leading to a behavior, [the ABCs of behavior](#).

Antecedent - Behavior -Consequence.

That consequence is feeding the behavior so it's going to happen again. So, you might want to change that.

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And the fourth zone is enrichment time. So, the times when you intentionally set the dog up with some enrichment. It could be a food puzzle. It could be one of my favorite stuffed toilet paper rolls or potentially a [Topp!](#) that you are setting the dog up so that you can slip out of the house or whatever it is that you have built that into a behavior modification program.

So, whatever, enrichment could be a sniff zone, it could be [your snuffle mat](#). There's a lot of different things that can be put into your umbrella of enrichment. But those first four zones, your dog's sleeping, eating, alone time, and enrichment, not too much can go wrong with those.

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Then we go into our next five zones. Zone number five is going to be the time that you are educating slash building a relationship with your dog. And that is nothing but predetermined antecedent arrangements that you have set the dog up to learn what you really want them to learn.

If you're in one of our programs, then the [lesson plans](#) arranges those antecedents so that your dog starts learning some skills. And those skills get layered on top of one another and you get behavior chains, and all good things happen. That time when you're training, there are going to be either quickies, [Daily Quickies](#), where they're woven into the fabric of your day.

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They might just take 30 seconds to a minute, or they're pre-planned training sessions, that might be five to ten minutes. Or if you're doing some sort of sport, it could be even longer than that. So that zone five is you're educating and you're relationship building and that hopefully, I mean, it's not always going to be rainbows and unicorns.

We all have bad training sessions now and again. But for the most part, it's leading you in a progressive way to somewhere really, really special between you and your dog.



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Zone six is an unpredictable environment. Here the antecedent arrangements can't be predicted. It could be a dog park. It could be your own backyard if your dog's left alone and they start digging holes or fence fighting with a neighbor's dog. It could be the dog hanging out at your house and somebody rings the doorbell, and you open the door, and they go flying out the door.

There's a lot of environments that it could be, but it could be just you walking. If you live in the city, walking out your front door to take your dog for a walk. There's a lot of things that could happen. Your dog could be [triggered by something](#). Your dog could be [over aroused or overexcited](#). There could be you know, a battle of wills between you and your dog because we find ourselves in zone six, which is the zone of unpredictability.

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Now, zone seven is zone six with awareness. So, zone seven is exactly the same. You may find that you have to go into that zone of unknown predictability, but you're going to go in with awareness and management. So, what does that look like?

Your dog will be on a leash, a harness, a head halter. You are going to be aware of what's going on in your environment. Even in your own house. You might have a Hot Zone set up where the dog has a behavior that they know that they can get reinforcement. You might even have a remote feeder set up.

You've gone in doing your homework. You've got a [relaxation protocol](#) so that the dog knows how to self-regulate and get into an appropriate level of arousal.

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So, zone seven is where you do go places. So, if I was taking my puppy This! to the park [where she was afraid](#) of other dogs, she was afraid of children, she was afraid of men. What could I do? They're all over the place.

Well, what I could do was stay up on a hill where she could learn to observe them from a distance and gradually with keeping her under threshold and playing all of the good games that she was learning, her Recaller games, we did get to a place where now she actually adores children and men, and she has no problem with other dogs.

But there was a time when it was a horrific experience for both of us until I realized I needed to be more proactive in keeping her in a safer environment where she wasn't going over threshold, where she wasn't triggered.

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So, zone seven is zone six with management and awareness. And this is a common question I get as somebody who likes to describe myself as a reinforcement-based dog trainer, people will say, "Okay well, being a reinforcement-based trainer is great for tricks or puppies, but what are you going to do with [an aggressive dog who's being triggered](#) on the street?"

Well, we're going to go into that zone of environmental unpredictability well-equipped. Well-equipped with strategies, well-equipped with reinforcement, well-equipped with distance as our friend. We're not going to find ourselves in the midst of it.

Rarely if ever would we find ourselves in the midst of an environmental trigger that we couldn't have predict because we're just not going to do it.



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So, you might say, "Well Susan, I live in the city, and I have to walk my dog down the street." Well, can you train from your balcony of your condo? Can you train from the front foyer? If I'm walking with my dog on the street, I might step off onto the gutter. Of course, protecting my dog and watching that there's no cars coming to let another dog pass.

I'm going to do my absolute best in order to prevent those triggers from happening so that I can use zone five to create so much confidence and joy in my dog that I don't have a dog that gets triggered anymore.

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Now that's the seven zones, but I said there was eight. The eighth zone is what I call the zone of pure joy. And that's where the dog might be playing with their BFF. They're roughhousing with another dog. Or they're out hiking with you off leash in a safe environment where you aren't asking them to do anything because you know the chances of them doing coming back is very, very small. But the chance of them getting environmental reinforcement is low.

Now, a conservation area, yeah you can control that. So, I would either have the dog on a leash or do like [Sniffspots](#) where you might have a smaller area, a small safe fenced in area where the dog can go off and investigate and sniff, but you don't expect them to come back. If they connect with you, you might praise them and put some food on the ground for them.

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You are going to grow your dog's recall, but that doesn't mean they don't get any joy in their life until you have a recall.

What I would do is zone eight is a place where I spend very little time when my dog is super young. Do they have great unabandoned joy? Absolutely. Doing things like recalls out in the front lawn or recalls in a baseball diamond between two people where I can guarantee that my dog is safe.

And then zone number eight grows and grows as zone number five gets better and better. So, when my dog gets so proficient at these games, what happens is the antecedent arrangements even in the woods where they might see wildlife, there's [so much in my favor now](#), they're not likely to go after the deer like they would've had they not had all that good training with me.

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Now I hope that makes sense. So, what is the difference? The difference is your daily habits. It's not just about playing a game. It's about playing the game while you are intentionally building up your own habits. Your dog can only be as well trained as you're willing to commit your time to helping that dog be well behaved.

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So, you get up in the morning, you have a wake-up time, and then you have your morning routine until you leave for work. You come home from work, you have whatever time before your dinner, you have your dinner, you have whatever time after dinner, you go to bed.

Where are you going to put in your quickies and where are you going to put in your intentional training sessions? "Oh Susan, no. I've got my TV shows that I've got to watch. And I've got my bowling night with my guys."





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Look at the habits of the people with really well-trained dogs and emulate those habits. You can be a victim of your circumstance or you can change that lens and be an action taker.

And when you become an action taker and you're willing to change your habits, change who you are so that you can have a better relationship with your dog, so that you can do more things with your dog, then what you are doing is you're making a commitment to your dog to make the rest of his life be the best of his life.

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

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 197: Outsmarting Distractions: How To Use Environmental Reinforcement in Dog Training](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Behavior Chains in Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Help for Dogs who Chase Chipmunks, Bicycles, and Neighbor's Cats \(Distraction Intensity Index\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 166: Puppy Freedom: How Much Is Too Much?](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 26: Pro Dog Training Tips to Get Your Puppy to Sleep All Night](#)

[Podcast Episode 102: Transitioning Your Dog Training: From All That Is Wrong To That Which Is Right](#)

[West Paw Toppl Treat Toys](#)

[PDF Download: How To Make A Snuffle Mat](#)

[Podcast Episode 172: How To Teach Your Dog Anything With My Training Plan](#)

[Podcast Episode 190: Using Daily Quickies To Fast Track Your Dog Training And Grow Your Dog's Skills](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 103: Excited Or Suspicious Dog? Dealing With Your Dog's Emotions](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 111: How An Anchor Dog Can Help Overcome Your Dog's Anxiety Or Reactivity](#)

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

[Sniffspot](#)

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



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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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