

Tips On Finding Time To Dog Train When Life Is Busy: Chat With Natalia Nizker

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

NN Natalia Nizker

Transcript

00:00:09

SG: Our next guest is a student. I wanted to bring on a student. And this was what really - the big thing for me was – people, when I was you know, talking on a podcast a couple weeks ago - and the comments said, “Well, no one's gonna have time for all those layers that she's talking about. Ugh. Just tell the dog to do it.”

So, Natalia [I'm gonna get her name wrong] Nizker. Natalia, you can tell me how badly I butchered that when you come on. Natalia is an elementary school teacher who enjoys working with dogs as a hobby. She lives in the state of Georgia with her husband, three sons and two dogs.

So Tabby is a five-year-old German Shepherd and Kinney is a one-year-old Malinois. Natalia volunteers at a local nonprofit rescue and dog training organization, as well as a service dog training group and runs a trick training group.

And I believe she's done a trick for Wag Nation, I believe she has, and is a certified trick dog instructor. Natalia is an alumni of Home School the Dog and Recallers, and a Wag Nation founding member. And [Susan's programs](#), methodology and podcasts are given Natalia a better understanding and confidence, and able to work her dogs and spread the joy. Positive reinforcement and trick training is her favorite. Okay, let's bring her on. Natalia, how are you?

NN: Oh, my goodness. You got my name perfectly.

SG: Did I?

NN: That's a rare, yeah.

SG: It is a rare for me.

NN: Nailed it.

SG: Now it's official.

NN: You get a cookie.

SG: I get a cookie. Okay. Natalia, I've got to ask you, number one, how old was Kinna when you got her?

NN: So, I adopted her she was five months. Love at first sight and everybody told me she's so mellow-full, Malinois, she's so chill. We got brought her home, you know, we worked with our German Shepherd, which was a little bit anxious, so we put in those layers that we talked about, and we made it work. Then some true colors started kicking in and we've been working and what helped the most is knowing from the beginning where to start with her and working through Recallers, you know following the games in order, following the coaching and advice what I've learned so far with working with Tabby before. It just skyrocketed you know, and just brilliant, brilliant.

And [as Kamal mentioned](#), you don't need a whole lot of time.

You talked about [Quickies on the podcast](#). I don't have a lot of time you know with a full-time job and kids you don't have a lot of time. So, it works.



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SG: So how did you do it? How did, how do you— Tater Salad wants to know as well. How did you do, like you're a school teacher and you've got a family and you have another dog so how did you find time to play those games? Swagger wants to know, too.

NN: So, what helped me personally is doing a little bit of homework the night before. I would watch the video, I would read the pdf, kind of do my little homework the night before so I know what I'm doing the next day. And in the morning, I try to structure the games that I play around contingent times.

Like for example in the morning when I'm waiting for my tea to boil, you know, to make a cup of tea, coffee, we play a few games in the kitchen. You know, ItsYerChoice is always on the go, it's 24/7 you know, working at door manners, Hot Zone, it's ongoing.

Then when I came back from work, I would also have a quickie going upstairs when I go change, you know we do a quickie upstairs and they know, they know by now that when mom is home, they're waiting on the stair, gets ready to, I took a picture the other day, they're ready to go looking at me like, "Are you coming? Are you coming?" To play. So just trying to plan around something that I do on a regular basis. So, it's more of a routine for me and I know, okay, it's quick. We get it done. We get the day moving.

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SG: And what would you say would be the most difficult challenge between the two dogs? Like either one of the dogs that when you were working through this that you hit this wall and you went, "Okay, this is not going the way I thought it would go."

NN: Well even initially [bringing Kinna home](#), I didn't know how Tabby would react and it did not go pretty. It was not pretty at all.

SG: And was she in a rescue? How did you like, because I know you work in a rescue, is that where you found her?

NN: Yeah. Kinna is a rescue, we're a volunteer within, they were having a festival and they had dogs for adoption. There just kind of, I helped walk her and I just fell in love. I'm like this is it, but we need to make sure she meshes with the other dog. And I didn't want to put her and Tabby through stress you know obviously I didn't want to make her miserable so that first day in the back of my mind I'm like, it's not gonna work. It's terrible. It's not gonna work.

The next day we work, thank goodness for [muzzle training](#) and thank goodness for conditioning all those great tools that we have. The Collar Grab, the muzzle, you know, she was familiar with it. So, we worked through taking them outside in a little bit more you know, open space and getting them familiarized with themselves.

So, long story short, I think also Kinna's demeanor and kind of attitude helped as well, the type of dog she is helped kind of neutralize some of Tabby's insecurities and thank goodness, thank goodness it's you know, happy ending.

SG: And was she a typical 'Mali-gator' when you got her? Was a lot of biting still?

NN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. She was very unpredictable. Like the look in her face just, I was like, "Hmm, I can't even tell what you're thinking, what you—." She was very, I was a little bit even kind of unsure myself, like I couldn't read her you know.

SG: They're definitely very different from a German Shepherd.



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NN: Yeah. Very different. Very driven. But introducing the games, you really see the change, the [sparks in their eyes](#), you see the joy, you see the connection, and it all just works beautifully from there. It's magical, magical.

00:06:46

SG: That's brilliant. That's brilliant. So now when did you start, like you teach tricks to all your dogs, right? And so, so that is also [part of that connection](#), right? So, when did you start introducing tricks to her and when did you say, "I see her now do what she's doing. Saying, 'When are we training? Let's go. I want to do this.'"

NN: So originally, I started with tricks with Tabby, with the German Shepherd, as a way to help her gain some confidence as well besides you know, working on loose leash walking and obedience. That really helped her come out of her kind of insecurities, come out of her, I don't know how to say it. That helped her become a little [more confident dog](#) and build connection with me. And I really didn't know what I was doing at first, to be honest. I just kind of you know, tried this, tried that. Then I started researching, I started reading books. I obviously you know, followed your podcast, [learned about shaping](#), and we worked at first without the clicker, just you know marker words on whatever I knew.

But then as I kind of got a little bit more knowledge and experience when I brought Kinna in, we started combining Recallers games with trick training and it just became a [model for training](#) because in order to teach a trick, which to me any behavior we teach is a trick, you go through those layers, you build it in small, gradual foundation so the dog gets it and the dog feels successful.

So, you have opportunity to reward, and they love it. It's fun. It's fun for both of you so it doesn't become a mundane kind of, "Ugh I got to train the dog." It becomes a game. It becomes [an experience for both of you and you both look forward to it](#).

SG: This is a good question for you. What game is your go-to in a [stressful environment](#)?

NN: That's a good one. I guess it depends on the dog for me. It depends on the situation and the dog, you know with Kinna the Malinois, she's very quick and she's very driven. You know, Hand Targets is our go-to, Search Game is our go-to, just to get her.

Those were actually my favorites also when we were working through her insecurities with golf carts. She could not stand them when I got her, she [wanted to chase](#) and cars too, but cars kind of faded out quickly, but golf carts it was, it took us quite some time to work through it. She was so over threshold. I couldn't even hand feed her. She was grabbing. She was, I was afraid she'll take my finger off.

SG: I think in one of your Recaller videos, in your year-end video you showed her, didn't you? Not chasing but watching in a distance, I don't know if it was—.

NN: The deer.

SG: Yeah, it was deer.

NN: Yes ma'am. Yeah, it was, so I tried to learn you know, I wish I found you guys sooner with when we got Tabby. So, I tried to learn from all my mistakes that I made earlier and kind of build again those foundations early on as soon as I got Kinna you know, working through all those types of scenarios that I knew if I expose her and I show her what good choices are, we can solidify that and instead of training the 'not.' We can train the 'do.' Live in [Do Land](#).

SG: Yes. So, you got her at five months old. When, at what point did people say, "Wow, this is a really cool dog," instead of, "Oh my gosh. What's wrong with your dog?"



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NN: I mean, she's brilliant from the start, you know [we got to have that belief and attitude](#). Even if when not perfect, it's not perfection, it's progress we're looking for but—. So, it's just working daily, just sharing what I know, what I've learned. Trying to pour that into her and sharing my joy with community of trick trainers, of people in Recallers.

I think that's my kind of main thing to try to spread the joy of training the dog with [game-based positive reinforcement tricks](#) to make it fun, to make it engaging, and make silly videos.

SG: Definitely she is like a role model that you mean you turned around this rescue dog who— yes, she was sweet. You had that going for you, but she still was a Malinois who had all those Malinois—.

So, you've done a brilliant job and I wanted people just to see how somebody who's a school teacher, who is a volunteer, who's a mother of three kids still can— you just squeeze in the layers.

NN: Baby steps. It's really possible. It does require effort. It does require some planning, right, and dedication, patience. But it is very doable because you guys provide all the answers and the community and the family and the supporters.

00:11:56

SG: Yeah. Let's give a shout out for the coaches because they are the unsung heroes of Recallers. They do not leave a stone unturned. So, thank you Natalia for being on and sharing your story and inspiring so many others for listening to you.

NN: Thank you. Congratulations again on the 200th podcast, so exciting.

SG: Thank you so much. Thank you. And Swagger says thank you as well.

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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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