

Dog Training Careers And Social Media: Chat With Emily Larlham Of @kikopup

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

EL Emily Larlham

Transcript

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SG: Our next guest probably needs no introduction. Emily Larlham is [Kikopup on YouTube](#) and I think one of the first dog trainers on YouTube. So, she is a renowned professional dog trainer and founder of [Dogmantics Dog Training](#). She gained fame on YouTube with Kikopup featuring over 350 free dog training tutorials.

Emily pioneered progressive reinforcement training which shuns psychological or physical intimidation in training. Emily hones her skills as an apprentice to Kyle Rayon, a prominent dog trainer.

She combines art and training skills to train complex behaviors and solve problematic ones. Emily has given seminars across the globe and featured in various media outlets.

And she's just a genuine person. She is who she appears. She's helpful, she's awesome. If you haven't had a minute to talk or meet Emily, here she comes on the frame. Emily, how are you?

EL: Really good. And I'm really excited about being invited on this 200th episode, so thank you.

SG: Oh, thank you. So have some hearts for Emily. I'm sure you've got a lot of fans out there. Everybody knows about you.

How many dog trainers were on YouTube when you started? Do you know? There couldn't have been many.

EL: Not very many. Just a few.

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SG: And so, what made you say, "Hey, I'm going to do a tutorial after tutorial after tutorial?"

EL: So first I started my channel, I had a little Chihuahua named Kiko, so I called my channel Kikopup. And I was going to just show her doing tricks.

Then I saw like a video that showed this is what positive reinforcement training is. At first you give the treat, and then you give the correction, and I was like, "Whoa, what?"

So, then I thought, I'm just going to make a tutorial. If someone wants to learn about this other way, they can. And then 32 people subscribed to my channel, and I was like, "Oh my goodness, I'm helping 32 people." It totally got me addicted to being able to spread information.

SG: And at the time, were you a professional trainer?

EL: I just started teaching classes, but I was a baby.

SG: Still a baby, look at you.

EL: I'm 43.

SG: Well, you look a little bit younger than that. Like 12, 15, I don't know.

EL: Yeah, I had just begun my training career with maybe a few years of learning before then, but it was like 17 years ago that I started my YouTube channel.



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SG: And what was your path up to that, on your way to becoming a professional trainer?

EL: I'll try to make it short. I always wanted to work with animals. I went into conservation, and I was doing sea turtle conservation for a while, but I couldn't afford to do it anymore. So, yeah.

SG: I love sea turtles by the way.

EL: Yeah, so then I went into rehabilitating rescued wildlife, and then on the other side was the shelter and they were hiring. So, I went, and I started working at the shelter next to the animal rehab. And then that is where I met my mentor. I was at the closed facility, so I actually got a great education because all the dogs there were either sick or unadoptable, meaning they hadn't passed the BA (Behavioral Assessment) test yet or that they'd failed it.

So, I got to learn about all the diseases and basically after being in that environment, I realized I wanted to learn more. So, you know, like going into a kennel of like the Hurricane Katrina dogs and there's like a Rottweiler in a small cage that's been in there for months because you know, they had heartworm, and they hadn't had their tests yet.

And I go in and then the Rottweiler won't let me leave. So, you know, I've cleaned everything up now it's time to leave and then the dogs pinned me like against the door that opens inwards and I'm like, "There's got to be, there's got to be something that I could do."

I think maybe that was one of the experiences that led me to I really want to learn about training these dogs rather than caring for them and trying to make their life bearable in the shelter.

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SG: And would you recommend that for young people who want to learn more about dog training to find a shelter?

EL: Definitely. Like I was lucky enough that my mentor was at the public facility and the manager of behavior and training had learned from Ted Turner, so it was all run based on the information of Ted Turner, everyone was using harnesses.

And so, I was in this little bubble of positive reinforcement, so I was like, this is how all shelters are run and all classes are run. And then when I went to, you know, YouTube I was like, "Whoa, people need to learn about this."

I think that the key is finding a mentor that you trust and that want to learn from. Like if you go to a mentor and you have like feelings of uncomfortability, like nowadays, you can learn from people online. You can research trainers that you like and find these online mentorships and then go and volunteer at [rescues](#), that's what I say.

SG: Yeah, great idea. Especially because a lot of people have a breed that they love, right? That they would love to work with.

And so, there's a lot of rescues that are looking like for foster homes, you could do a training right in your own home with a rescue.

And every dog you train, you get to be a better trainer. And even if you don't want to be a trainer, you just you know want to A, practice or B, help out a rescue. I think that's a great thing for sure.

Do you have any regrets at going on social media so young, because you're putting yourself in the fishbowl of the public?



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EL: I think that I don't know where I learned it, but right from the start. Maybe it's because I am a little bit socially anxious or I really like to you know, make sure that I'm presenting myself in a way that it won't come back to bite me in the butt.

So, like everything that I say online and in a video, when I watch through a video or I'm talking online, I think to myself, "Can someone turn this around and use it against me?" Or even like, can they take that sentence out of this paragraph and then use that and go, "haha" and then "you said this."

And so like, I'm constantly like thinking about how other people's behavior works. Also presenting my work in a way where I feel like it's a choice. And there was a time in the past where I made a couple videos of 'don't train this way,' 'don't do this to your dog.' And those were the videos that people got really, really angry and frustrated with me, and I actually deleted them.

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SG: You know, it's what's right or wrong for you. And so, you have a membership on your YouTube page that people get extra videos from that. Now, is there any coaching or is it just an extra video that you give them, Emily?

EL: No, it's just an extra video that's more based for like dog trainers or people who want like more advanced material. So, like I might problem solve a behavior with my dog or something like that rather than something on YouTube where people just want the steps and not too much. What happens if this happens, what happens if that happens type of thing.

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SG: What is the best piece of advice you could give to these young people that are training on TikTok, for example, or where they're getting a lot of people watching them?

EL: Yeah. I think my tip is whenever you say something that you don't know if it's true or if it's your opinion, you say, before you say it, "In my opinion." And I'll say, "In my honest opinion, I believe this and there's no scientific evidence, but this is what I believe."

And I'll say that, just so they get the disclaimer that you know rather than "You should always go through the door first, you know, because then the dog will learn, and the dog will think." Or you know, if I talk about how the dog is thinking I say, "In my opinion, I believe the dog might be thinking or feeling this way."

SG: That is a great piece of advice. Or even to say, "This is how I do it," right? Or "This is what works for my dogs" but to make blanket statements. Dog training is evolving and the way we all do things right now, 20 years from now, like there'll be pieces of it that you can see, but it'll be so different.

And so, the absolutes are going to be a point of judgment, aren't they? So, who's influenced your training the most?

EL: It depends. I kind of like when I started training, I got lots of different things from different places. So, the mentor that I talked about at the Humane Society wasn't into luring and wasn't into trick training, but really into like the [dog's emotional state and arousal](#) and how we can change that using food.

Like you can build arousal and lower arousal with food. And that blew my mind. But then I saw, I went on YouTube, and I saw [Mary Ray with her dog](#). And then I saw she used luring, and then I was like, "I'm going to do it. I'm going to try it, I'm going to try it." And I was amazed. And everyone was like, "You can't lure. You can't lure." And I was like, "I don't care." I think those are my two major influences right at the beginning.



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SG: I like to tell people that Mary Ray, she was here teaching and I love [training tricks](#). And I had no interest in doing Freestyle because I didn't want to dress up and dance. I didn't see that as part of me. But I was doing some tricks with my Border Collie and my Jack Russells and I had them weaving backwards between my legs and she's like, "Wait, what are you doing and how did you teach that?"

And so, I'm the one that taught Mary Ray how to teach her dogs to weave backwards between legs. I didn't know it was a thing. It was just yeah, probably I was getting something wrong and said, "Hey, this is kind of cool. Let's do it this way." It's amazing.

Listen Emily, I appreciate that you came on here today. I know that you do not like speaking in public, but you are amazing at it. You've got so many great things to share and inspire young people and people who are struggling with their dog training. So, I encourage you to you know, maybe come back and chat with me again, but definitely do more of it because you're a great inspiration.

EL: Thank you.

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SG: So, thank you for being here. Swagger says, 'Thank you for being here too, Emily.'

EL: Wow. I can't even imagine what behavior he's reading off of you.

SG: It's I think I keep trying and I think it's a tone in my voice when I start thanking or wrapping up, there's something that he's ready. He's ready to say goodbye, too. Dogs are amazing, aren't they? They, if we could pick up patterns of reinforcement the way they could, yeah, I probably would eat way too many chocolate chip cookies, that's for sure. Thank you, Emily.

EL: Thank you Swagger.

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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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