

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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Did you know there's seven developmental periods in a dog's life from birth to adulthood? And today I would like to look at those seven developmental periods with the lens of four critical criteria. Now, you might be saying, "Oh Susan, I don't have a puppy."

I know today is going to be very eye-opening to those of you, even with adult dogs, especially those of you with rescue dogs, knowing how you can maybe reach a dog that has been difficult to break through up until this point.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Four critical elements that we are going to be talking about today. And I think these are going to be critical to every dog owner. I'm going to be walking you through the stages of development of a puppy from birth to adulthood, but these four critical elements are going to be eye-opening to you as I put them as a filter, or a lens, over each stage. Okay, so let's cut right to the chase. What are those four critical elements?

The first one is. As a dog owner, as a pet owner, your expectation of your dog, your expectation of yourself. Super important that you keep the two of them distinct, that what are you expecting of your dog's behavior at this moment? What are you expecting of yourself to help your dog achieve the ability to give you that behavior?

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Now, when dog training goes wrong, it's always one of three things. Number one, it's the skill. And it's going to start with your skill. Your skill as a dog trainer to convey to your dog how to do exactly what you want them to do without having any kind of bribery or reinforcement on them. Can they do what you expect them to do?

And in order for them to be brilliant, I'm sorry my friend, you have to be brilliant. You really have to start to learn more about, not just how to train to sit, down, and come, but the understanding of what motivates a dog, of how a dog's fears impact their behavior.

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So, number one is skill. And your expectation of your dog's skill, and your expectation of yourself in learning how to convey that skill to your dog.

Number two is environment. And that is the environment that you're asking your dog to do whatever behavior it is. It's an environment that you've trained in and hasn't changed for the dog. Is this a fair environment? Because keep this in mind, [environment always wins](#).

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It doesn't matter who the dog is, if there's nothing to compete against the environment, aka the skill level that you've put in, environment always wins. So, environment is going to produce some surprise for the dog that is going to have them say, "Yeah, there's more value over here than there is over there," unless you have put in the skill to have that dog change their mind.



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Now what is the third factor? And the third factor is will. And this one is a little bit controversial because to me my dog's will to do what I ask them to do is all dependent on my ability to inspire that dog through motivational games. To want to [have a relationship with me](#), to want to be my teammate, to want to hang out with me.

And so, that isn't a given. Now for some of you maybe it has been and bravo to you, but I don't believe the expectation should be. Now some people say if the dog chooses to not do something, they're being willful. Their will is saying, "I'm not choosing that therefore I need to go to coercion." I don't believe that's necessary.

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I believe [we can use whatever that dog loves](#), even something from the environment as a reinforcer to build the will to want to work with you. So, four critical elements to all dog training. Your expectations of your dog, your expectations of yourself, because I'm just going to remind you this and I know you've heard it from me before if you're a regular listener, I believe our dogs will always do the best they can with the education we've given them aka the skill, in the environment that we've put them in.

They're always going to do the best. So, if they [run after a rabbit](#) when you expected them to come when they were called, that is their best. It isn't them being willful or stubborn or blowing you off. It's the best they can do in the presence of a rabbit right now. All that you need to do is say, "Wow, my expectation might have been a little out of whack and I need to dig deeper into this game-based training that Susan Garrett talks about."

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More on that later. Okay, so those are the four critical elements. Now let's talk about the developmental stages that I said upfront. There's seven of them. Now, the first few are really the ship sailed.

Number one is a Neonatal period, and that's from birth till two weeks of age. And why I'm even mentioning it because we're not going to have any expectations of the puppy. I think it's really, really important for everybody to know. You might not know this, that's why I'm going to just squeeze it in, that puppies are born without the ability to regulate much of anything in their life.

They can regulate heat and cold to a certain extent in that they can snuggle closer to mom, or they can crawl further away to get cool, and they can regulate their eating in that they have the ability to use their nose and find a milk source.

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That's pretty much it. They're born blind, they're born deaf, and they actually can't even pee or defecate on their own. They need co-regulation from their mother in that after she feeds them, she will lick the puppy's bellies and then lick their genital areas to get them to relieve themselves. So, zero regulation on a puppy's part in the first two weeks of life.

And then we get into the second stage, the Transitional stage, which is two weeks to four weeks. And here's where puppy's eyes open, their ears open.

Now they still can't really see very well. They can see light, they can see shadows and blobs, but they really can't focus. So, it's still, they're transitioning from complete dependence. But they can now amble around, bump into their litter mates. And in this period, they'll start regulating through voice, through vocalization.



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You'll start to hear peeps that turn into yips, and it's kind of hysterical actually as they go through these stages of learning to use their voice. During this stage it's super important that these puppies get daily interaction with humans, touching, talking, that they learn the voices and the touch of the people in their life.

Now, why am I telling you all this? Because some of the dog training problems you might be seeing might be related to these two first stages that your puppy may or may not have gotten.

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Now I don't want you to be concerned and go, "Oh my gosh, now what? I don't think my dog got that." It doesn't matter. We're starting at square zero. I'm just saying that could have influenced it. I don't want you to worry about it, I just want you to move forward from that.

Alright, stage number three. This is where the fun really starts. It's Socialization Period Number One. Now, some people put these together. I break them up into two. So, Socialization Period Number One is from four weeks to seven weeks, and this is where puppies really learn from their litter mates. Actually, they learn how to regulate when one of the litter mates is [being a bully](#).

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One of the first things that I see in a litter of puppies is if they don't want to be picked on, they'll turn away. They'll turn their head. They'll turn their body. That's one of the first things that puppies do. They start learning all of these little cues based on the response it gets from another puppy, "Well that worked."

Now these are innate, they just come out of the dog, but it creates a response they're looking for, and then you'll see more and more of them develop in that first socialization period. So, interacting with their litter mates is super important.

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So those of you who have a singleton, like my guy Swagger, there may or may not have been any interaction. I actually drove Swagger twice a week to [play with other puppies](#) and another litter the same age, but a lot of singletons get nothing. So that can impact the puppy's ability to self-regulate around other puppies or dogs.

So, in this first socialization period is really where you see the puppy start being operant in that they learn. One of the things they learn really, really well is if you give them an area to potty, to urinate and defecate, they will seek out that area to keep the rest of their bedding area clean. So that's a really cool thing and it starts as young as four to seven weeks, it really does.

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My litters are pretty much [potty trained](#) by the time they leave here. So, Socialization Period Number Two goes from eight to 12 weeks. Now, this may be more pertinent for you because most of you won't be getting your puppies before that age, and ideally you shouldn't. Best age to get a puppy for me is between 10 and 12 weeks. Yes, I do like them to stay with the breeder longer because in Socialization Period Number Two, they learn a lot from their dam. That's where they learn discipline.

Now, all of the bitches that I've had that have had puppies, and I've had several litters of Jack Russell's and Border Collies, I have never seen a bitch be mean to a puppy when they're disciplining. I would say 90% of the discipline happens through play.



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And the odd one that doesn't learn through play, the bitch just freezes. That's it. But it's really cool to see the responses of the puppy then lowering their body, giving a little tongue flick, telling the mom, "I get the message," and moving on. So, this is the second socialization period, which I think is really important.

And I recognize a lot of breeders say, "No, you have to pick the puppy up at seven weeks." I beg, if you can keep puppies together until at least nine weeks. And it's depending on the puppy. So, a younger puppy, and a lot of people listening to this goes, "Oh, no, no, no. I want it to imprint with me. I want my puppy to—" That's old. That's like old, old, old school, I'm sorry guys.

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If you got a puppy at 12 weeks old and you can't build a relationship from that point on, you have seriously more problems than your dog staying with the litter too long, really. Let it go because it's so much healthier for the puppies.

Now, the only caveat to that is if the breeder isn't doing a lot of work to help build new [socializing skills](#) for that puppy, they need to see a lot of children. A lot of you know, different kinds of people, go on outings. There's a lot of things that breeders should be doing during that age.

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And if the breeder starts doing that too young, it actually can have the opposite effect. It can create some fear in the puppies if they get out to these environments in you know, when they're too young for that. This is a great age, eight to 12 weeks when you have a litter of puppies, they love to follow mom. Even though they may or may not be drinking from mom anymore. You can use that 'follow instinct' to teach puppies to stay with you on a walk.

So, I take the whole litters around the field. Well, we don't go the whole way around because they're young. But we take them on these big adventure walks, and they don't stray because I've got mom, every once in a while, I'll stop and give them a drink from their mother or give them reinforcement from me. So, they're learning to follow humans.

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It's an amazing time as a breeder that you can teach new things. The 'adventure walk' being one of them. Just know that in eight to 12 weeks is where you could possibly see the first fear period in that dog. And the environment alone can be scary.

So, the environment in the litter, puppies are brave, but when they're alone, environments can be scary. So, you are the big comforter. You are who the puppy turns to, to get their confidence from. And take advantage of that, meaning this is the time when you get your puppy home at 9, 10, 11, 12 weeks old, that you should start playing those bonding relationship games like our Recallers or our Home School the Dog games.

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And if you are listening to this and you're going, "I don't know what you mean," or you know you need help, then I will let you in on a secret at the end of this on how we, my team and I, will help you out with that. Now, looking at these first four periods, you are not actually going to own that puppy until the last period, the socializing period two from eight to 12 weeks. If you have a puppy from a breeder, a responsible breeder, you won't be getting that puppy before eight to 12 weeks.



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So now let's look at your expectations. What are your expectations? What is the skill that puppy should have? What are the environments where the puppy will be brilliant in? Well, for the first few weeks, because the environment's super scary, you are going to get this false sense of security because the puppy's going to be getting their confidence through you.

And you're going to be thinking, "Oh my goodness gracious, this puppy just adores me. Look at how he just follows me everywhere." Yeah, that's kind of nice. It's how you bond because all these endorphins rush through your body and you're in love with your puppy you think, "Oh my God, they love me, too. Look at how she's following me everywhere."

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Remember, this is a period of development. You are going to crash and burn very soon if you don't recognize you have to put in, your expectations shouldn't be you anthropomorphizing what you're seeing in saying "It's because he loves me."

No. Relationships have to be built through reinforcement. Relationships have to be built through [arranged coincidences](#) so that the puppy will choose you, and starting to play games is the best way to do that.

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Now we're moving into period number five. And that is the juvenile period. That is from ages three months to six months and here's where the 'fun' is really going to begin, because here's what's going to happen. The environment's not going to be as scary because this puppy has grown confidence and they've learned nothing bad has happened in any new environment I've gone in. Therefore, confidence starts going through the roof.

And this is where people say, "My puppy's being naughty, my puppy's blowing me off. My puppy doesn't listen anymore." It's because puppies are born with unbelievable curiosity. And so, if you haven't put in some layered foundation to help grow that relationship, go back to what I said off the top. Environment always wins.

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Now, if you're in a pickle because of this, it can be fixed. Don't get too concerned. But I just want to open your eyes to the fact, what are your expectations of that puppy's skill versus how much have you put in without, yes, we use reinforcement to build behavior, to build understanding, but can you go into any environment without reinforcement on you and ask your puppy to do these things?

That's where we're heading. And until we get there, we need to manage environments. Don't let them have access to bunny farms. Because they're going to make choices you're going to think are bad, but they're not bad. As far as that puppy's concerned, they're awfully good. They're making choices because the environment always wins.

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Period number five is a biggie. Now at the end of period five, you might see some puppies starting to deal with hormones. And in [podcast episode 217](#) where I talked about being able to self-regulate, this is a new ballgame. When we move into period number six where we're dealing with our puppies' adolescents, they're over six months old. The adolescent stage goes from six months to 18 months, and they're going to learn how to deal with all these hormones rushing through their bodies.



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They've probably had a couple of vaccines, and that can affect behavior change as well. And if you're of the type that uses things like topical pesticides on your dogs for fleas or ticks, that could also have effects on your dog [as well as nutrition](#) and all these other things.

So, you're going to see changes, and this is where people think, "Oh, my dog has changed," or "My dog has become a brat," or "My dog—." No. They don't need to have the firmer hand of God on them. They just need your expectations to look at the time that you've put in on yourself.

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What is your education? How much have you learned? Are you learning just through blog posts and the odd YouTube, or surfing YouTube for answers? That is not fair to your dog. That is not fair to your puppy. You know I always tell my students, "The smarter you become, the better behaved your dogs become."

And so, you need that investment. Expectations, skill, environment, and the dog's will. The dog will show you, "Oh I can listen to you all you want as an adolescent in the kitchen when you're opening a slice of cheese. But outside when there's other dogs, I can't. I can't function."

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And you see, it's not the dog's fault. They're always doing the best they can. I think it's super important that you understand that. We move to our final stage, which is from 18 months to anywhere around three years that that dog is finally mature.

18 months, they may look their physical height and they may not grow substantially after that. But emotionally and mentally, there is still a long way for them to go.

So please don't have the expectations be like, "They should know better now, they are an adult dog." They might physically look like one, but they are a long way from being that adult dog.

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Now, when you think of your own dog, whatever stage of development that they're in right now, you've got to think about the training of both the skills you want for them to be an amazing family pet and the emotional wellbeing conditioning that you need to put in time so that you are building positive CERs (positive conditioned emotional responses) to environments that they need to go to.

Including the veterinarian or maybe the groomers. They need to be given the opportunity to say, "[Yes, I want my nails done.](#)" And no dog that I know of is born that way. You have to grow your education to put in the time to help that dog no matter what stage they are to grow, not just behaviors.

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It's not just about coming when called and bringing you the paper. And it's not just about whatever sport you want to play. It's about putting that dog's emotional wellbeing first. Now what I mentioned early on, for those of you who are ready to put your dog's emotional wellbeing first and want to know how you connect with your dog, I strongly encourage you to look into our Recallers program.

But there's a hitch. Recallers, although it's available on our website, anyone could buy it right now, it's I believe twice the price that we sell it at during our big Connected Dog event that we hold once a year.

But because you are listening to this podcast episode, if you write to my team at [wag@dogsthat.com](mailto:wag@dogsthat.com), now listen really closely. I want the subject line to be 'My Dog Needs Skills.'



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And let's truthfully, if you put, "I need skills," we're going to give you an opportunity to join our Recallers community and it won't be at the investment that you see on the website. Even though it'd be an amazing, even if you had to pay full price.

If you're listening to this podcast, I want you to be able to have the kind of life I'm talking about. I mean, it's magical. It's magical when you look through the lens of, "What are my expectations of my dog. How can I have high expectations because I know my dog's will is as high as my expectations?"

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I hope all this makes sense to you. It's a lot to cram into one podcast episode. Please jump over to YouTube. Leave me a comment, let me know what this all makes sense to you. And while you're over there, please leave a like.

And please also to be sure to share this episode with anybody you know, either getting a puppy, has a puppy, or is struggling with their dog. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Recallers:

Contact us at [wag@dogsthat.com](mailto:wag@dogsthat.com) with the subject line **My Dog Needs Skills**

### Resources:

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

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

[Podcast Episode 196: Why Mastering Reinforcement Is The Linchpin To Reinforcement Based Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 24: Help for Dogs who Chase Chipmunks, Bicycles, and Neighbor's Cats \(Distraction Intensity Index\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 159: Help! My Puppy Is A Bully And Plays Too Rough](#)

[Podcast Episode 127: Puppy Socialization: Playtime For Puppies And Permissions](#)

[Podcast Episode 48: Potty Train Your Puppy in a Week \(Easy 3 Step Process\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 199: Puppy Fear Periods: Help For Socializing Puppies Or Rescue Dogs Scared Of People](#)

[Podcast Episode 44: Using Coincidences and Positive Associations in Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 217: Understanding Emotional Regulation In Dogs To Create Calm](#)

[Podcast Episode 204: Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2](#)

[Podcast Episode 107: Pedicure Please: 3 Steps To Dog Nail Trimming Or Grooming Success At Home!](#)



### 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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