

Mindshifting Dog Behavior Problems To Overcome Extreme Training Challenges

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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I just returned home from a trip to Houston where I competed at an agility trial with my young dog This!. Her second actual trial. And if you've been following along, you know that we've had some [struggles along the way](#). Well, we had an epically amazing weekend, which led me to the topic of today's podcast.

What mindset do people have to do to either work through or support somebody who's working through extreme dog training challenges?

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Hi, I am Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And you know, looking back over all the dogs that I've owned, I've had some that are definitely easier to train than others, and I've had three that I would say were extremely challenging for me. And I would say my Border Collie Buzz that I wrote the book [Shaping Success](#) about, he was probably a challenge because it was a transition for me from using punishment in training and transitioning to not using punishment in training. It was a very difficult transition.

And there had to be one dog that was that pivot and Buzzy was it. And I couldn't have picked a more perfect dog, because he just had the best laissez-faire attitude about life. And so, I look back, especially, I was at this agility trial on the weekend, and I saw some dogs that were more challenging for other people.

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And generally speaking, the challenges come because maybe a dog elevates with [too much emotion and gets too high](#). Maybe they redirect that on another dog or on their owner, or they just get to a point where they can't possibly listen to verbal cues or physical cues from their handler. And that's frustrating and they're a challenge.

Or there could be challenges in the opposite direction that behaviorally that dog is maybe a little fearful, shy, worried, [not really confident](#) in public, call it what you like. There's a lot of things that aren't normal, not that there is a normal dog out there, that they present challenges to us. And so, all of us, every dog I've ever owned presents a challenge, at least one challenge that we have to work through.

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And so, I believe it's my mindset that allows me to work through those challenges possibly easier than it would other people. And so, I would like to just go through what I think the important things to adopt in your own mindset when you want to not just work through a challenge or support somebody, a student, a loved one, a friend who's working through a challenge with their own dog.

Okay number one, most important is there has to be love and connection for that dog. This is not going to work, like you can train any dog, I had the great honor of training a dog I did not connect with. I did not love this puppy, I don't know why. It was a dog that I was training for somebody else, and I used to bring in people's puppies and they had to sign a waiver saying, "I have the right after one month if the puppy's in for training, I can buy the puppy and find you a replacement, give you what you paid for and find another puppy for a replacement."



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Because I just fell in love with puppies. I actually got two puppies, kind of that way. But this puppy, there was nothing. Could I train her? I trained her exceptionally well, but I never could say I love that puppy. I think she was with me until she was nine months old. And it was an honor to train her because it gave me the understanding of what it feels like when I am absolutely in love with a puppy.

So, I can look at a litter of puppies and think, "Am I going to get a puppy in this litter?" And if I don't see a puppy that goes, "Yeah, you need me." I can just pass it by because I had the honor of training a dog I couldn't connect with. So, number one, absolutely you have to be able to say you love this puppy.

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Even in the midst of the darkest days training with This!, I would tell her every single night, "I love you and I am so glad you picked me."

I sincerely meant that because I just had a vision of [how amazing our life was going to be](#). If you can't say 'I love and really connect with this puppy,' then I believe you would be better off finding it another home, because there is somebody out there who's waiting for that puppy to love and connect with. And it will be awesome.

Just look at Tater Salad if you're watching this on YouTube, who's in the picture in the background here. Obviously, he was loved but really wasn't connected with, which is why he caused [so many problems](#) and turned into a different dog when he got into our household.

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Okay, point number two. This is a biggie. You have to be able to adopt [a positive mindset](#).

And I know this is not going to be natural for some of you. Some of you will just, you are more protective, you're more a glass half empty. But here's the truth, you cannot think a positive thought at the same time your brain is thinking a negative thought.

So, knowing that you can work consciously to replace any negative thought that comes into your head with something that is positive.

Instead of looking at what you don't like about the puppy or what you wish was different about the puppy, think of all the things that are amazing and think of this one thing: What is your training plan that you're going to use to train that? And are you having progress? And if you're not, you're going to change that.

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That's going to lead me to our third point, and that is you need a [solid proven training plan](#) written by a mentor that you trust always puts the emotional wellbeing of your puppy or dog first. There are not a lot of people who will say that to you.

And so, when you're training from a place of 'Is this best?' Not, 'Oh, it's just a dog he can put up with it.' Or, 'He'll get over it.' Or, 'It's for his own good.'

A trainer who has a proven training plan that will get you to where you want to go or is willing to work with you to say, "I've done this."

Here's my videos of what I've done. Let me share my journal, and is there any other ideas that you can come up with?" That's what you need. You need somebody in your corner that's got your back from a training point of view.



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Point number four, daily conversations with your dog. Now, you may think this sounds silly, but I tell This! all the amazing things about her. I tell her I love how determined she is when things aren't right, and I know she doesn't feel good, and yet she will work through all of her emotions and play with me.

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I tell her what was amazing in our day yesterday. And I don't tell her things like, "Oh, you're so smart and you're so beautiful, and you're—" Yeah, sometimes I tell her she's cute because she is just so darn cute and how much I love her.

But mostly I tell her of all the things that she's doing that are amazing. And you're going to say, "Susan, you're a kook. You're talking to your dogs." Let me tell you, dogs 100% can feel the emotion of our words.

Everything we say has energy, not just in how we say it. So, if you say, "Oh, you're such a little brat! And I can't stand everything that you do." But you say it in a happy way, trust me, your dog gets that message. You can say, "No. His tail's wagging."

Do you want to say 100% that I'm wrong? You go right ahead, but I'm not taking that chance.

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Because they've proven with science that dogs absolutely can sense emotions of people. And so why can't they sense what we're truly feeling even when we're trying to put on a persona that we really mean something else?

So daily conversations with your dogs that are positive, that are intentional, that are saying, "This is what we're going to do. Here's how we're going to do it. We're going to have a blast, let's go."

Point number five, and this is so important, I mean they're all important, is your support group.

Your peer support group. And I've divided this into three because I've seen three amazing support groups for This! and I.

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Number one, your training group. Now for me, I mean obviously I'm coming up with my own training plans, but I'm not going to let my ego hold back what my puppy could be learning from. So, I am inviting other people to input on my training plans. People like my friend Lynda Orton-Hill, or Sharon Steele from our team, or [Nadine Hehli, or Simone Fasel](#), two of our awesome students over in Europe.

I constantly will go to them for input. And they're giving me great training advice but they're also instilling their constant belief in both me and my dog. They're constantly saying things, you could say, "That's just crap, Susan. That's just somebody making stuff up." No, it isn't. They are painting a vision of my future, a vision that I love to see.

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So, my training group extends to, I remember when my friend Jess Patterson and Zeljko Gora were here doing seminars when This! was not at her best. The two of them did not ever blink an eye.

They did not say one derogatory thing about what we were doing or where we were at. They did nothing but encourage. Encourage everything we were doing. Now, that's one group, your training group.



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Your next group is your everyday group. These are the people that interact with your dog and you on a daily basis. That may be see times when your dog is more fearful or reactive, or not listening or really being over the top. And they don't say things like, "Well, he's just a big scaredy cat, isn't he? Oh, look at him, Mr. Crazy-No-Listen." Instead, they support you.

"How are you feeling? What's going on? Do you have a plan? Do you need somebody to bounce some ideas off of?" Or, they say nothing but say, "You've got this."

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So, my everyday support group may not be dog trainers, although Kim is a pretty darn good dog trainer, but they interact with my dogs in a way that makes them feel like everything is possible.

And you may have somebody around who isn't, and that would be a critical conversation for you to say, "Look, this is difficult for both my dog and for I, and while we're working through this, I would love it if you could you know, find a motivational quote to read to me every day. That could be awesome." Give them something they can do that can fill your cup rather than draining it.

Now the third group are just people I see at agility trials or agility events. And there's people who I can tell genuinely love This!. Now her fan club is getting really big after me talking about her on my podcast, but long before that, there were people in my local area, they don't even necessarily train with me, but they just spend time to love on This!.

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There are ladies in this area, and they know who they are, that This! just adores because even when she was walking around, being all wide-eyed and afraid, they always were patient and took time to develop a relationship with her and love on her. And now they're some of her biggest fans as she's finally having some joy in the agility ring.

So, your support group is so important.

Think about your own peer group. Are they critical of you? Are they critical of your dog? Are they critical in a sarcastic way? Do they give your dogs nicknames based on some of your dogs challenges?

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I can't say this word because I'm going to get bleeped out, but some people call their dog a 'chicken (*bleep*) dog.' Some people call their dog like 'the spun monkey,' and they'll say, "Oh, I don't mean anything by it."

Just sit with it. How does that make you feel? Does that make you feel that you're heading in the right direction with your dog? Have a conversation or consider the people in your peer group.

Remember, you can't think a negative and a positive thought at the same time. They are filling your head with negative thoughts and the only way you're going to move from a place of challenge to a place of joy with this dog is if your mindset is right when you're doing it.

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And so be intentional about those people, have a conversation. And if they want to share criticism say, "Hey, instead of offering a critique, if you could like, share a vision of what it could look like or just gimme a hug, anything rather than labeling my dog by the misbehavior as our society would see it today."



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Remember, dogs read that energy. And when you are calling somebody's dog a 'blank,' "Oh, look at Mr. Slow Poke. Oh, look at him. Was it him or the tortoise that won that race?" While you are [labeling that person or that dog](#), you are effectively showering them with energy.

Is that energy that's going to help them get to the next level?

It's hard enough carrying the challenges of their dog, please don't add to that burden if you are their friend or in their peer group. And hearts to all of you who are helping to lift those people up.

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Point number six, you've got to get some [resiliency and absolute belief in yourself](#), in the Universe, belief in what's possible.

And it could be you listen to motivational videos. I love YouTube. I've got a playlist of motivational videos. You listen to motivational podcasts. Whatever it takes to help you believe in you.

I personally believe in mantras, and if you would like me to put together a short list of affirmations to help you work through dog training challenges, I would be happy to do that. Just jump over to our Shaped by Dog page or our YouTube channel and say, "Yes, Susan. I would love a video just on affirmations."

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Number seven, you've got to be willing to [look beyond the box](#). And so, with This! I tried the dog training. You can't dog train something that's not dog training. A lot of times the behavior that you're seeing, the too high, the too fearful, the too reactive, a lot of times guys that's [related to gut issues](#).

And so, you've got to keep testing, not "Oh, I tried a different dog food. It didn't work." Oh my gosh, there's so many things you could be looking at. So be willing to look beyond. Once I got This! less fearful and more confident, I then looked beyond my sport.

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I went back and trained Flyball. I started talking and getting advice from some positive protection work trainers. Look outside your box.

You know, there's this great quote I heard on a podcast as a biohacker by the name of Bryan Johnson and he said, "Mastery hits targets, others can't hit. But genius hits targets others can't see."

And so, when you are working through a challenge, you've got to believe in the genius that's within you because all of us have that genius there.

All you have to do is ask the right questions of the Universe and the answers will come. Maybe they'll come in the form of, 'This is your guru. This is who you need to take information from.' Maybe it's in the form of 'Have you tried this?' Within us all is that genius. Just polish that belief in order to find it.

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Number eight, you've got to have emotional releases for yourself. You've got to have a way to get rid of all that burdens you while you're working through this training.

Because there will be some embarrassment, possibly shame, possibly guilt.

'Oh, maybe somebody else wouldn't be here on year two. Oh, maybe somebody else could have done this better, or maybe somebody who could have run better.'



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You've got to find a way to help yourself release all of that negative energy. I personally, I meditate. I try to meditate an hour a day, I always get in at least 20 to 30 minutes a day.

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Meditate, listening to positive podcasts, having positive influence in your life. Exercise, or just have a long conversation with somebody who really believes in you. Call it a pep talk, I don't care.

Find a way to fill up yourself.

Don't go it alone and don't keep struggling on empty, my friend.

You need to fill your own cup in order to be able to fill your dog's.

Number nine, trust those answers are there for you. Keep asking better questions. They are there. You've got to, now, if you haven't done this already, [pull out that journal](#).

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And you're going to journal both your [emotions that you're seeing in your dog](#), the joy meter, I like to call it, and you're going to journal your own emotions so that you know, "Okay. I've had a lot of really great days. And look in response, my dog's had a lot of really great days."

So, journaling, being persistent, keeping the vision that the answers are there, you have to trust that.

And finally, number ten, self-awareness and self-talk.

I've talked about self-belief, about filling your cup. How do you talk about your dog? So important.

So important because negative thought, positive thought, and the self-awareness.

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You know what, two weeks ago I had slotted in to go out to the building and do some grids with This!. I hadn't done grids with her for months. There's just so many things that I had to catch up on.

And I had such a busy day. My day started with a meeting at 7:00 AM and went all the way through. I got in one meal, it was 7:30, but it was scheduled to do my training with This! and Momentum, and then I had to shoot a podcast after that.

So, 9:00 o'clock my scheduled time for a podcast, that was my day.

And I got out to the building and I'm tugging with This! and maybe she could feel that I wasn't all there.

And maybe I hadn't checked in on my own self-awareness.

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But after tugging a little bit, I went to move her into the grids, and she was having none of it.

And she just was not my dog.

Now, Susan with her cup full could have broke away from that, gone to the end of the building, done something fun, created some joy, and then come back.

Susan, who'd had that day, already had the self-awareness to say, "This is going to end in a place where it's not going to be the most joyful for either of us. So, I'm going to have her hop it up on the bed. I'm going to tell Kim when you're done training Belief, just have some fun with her. I'm going back in to start my podcast early."



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Self-awareness is so important. Know where you are. Are you in a place where you can deal with your dog at their worst?

Because when you're dealing with challenges, you're not always going to get them at their best. Whatever that best is for you.

I hope this has been worthwhile.

And if you yourself are not working through challenges with your dog, please share this podcast with somebody who is.

Because trust me when I say that mindset is the number one limiting factor that holds people back from bringing the most joy into their dogs and their own lives.

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

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 203: Reactive, Unmotivated and Fearful: Finding Resiliency For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 1](#)

[Book: Shaping Success by Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 136: Help Your Excited Dog Calm Down And Stop Barking, Lunging, Spinning, Nipping](#)

[Podcast Episode 79: Reduce Anxiety and Grow Your Dog's Confidence with These Pro Dog Training Tips](#)

[Podcast Episode 36: Puppy Selection: How I Do It and Why I Didn't This! Time](#)

[Podcast Episode 78: How to Train a Rescue Dog with Behavior Problems](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 207: Rescue Dog Behavior: Training Rehomed Dogs Chat With Nadine Hehli and Simone Fasel](#)

[Podcast Episode 124: The Woo Side Of Dog Training: Power of Words](#)

[Podcast Episode 208: Brilliance, Resilience And Gratitude: Inspiration And Motivation With Elliott Connie](#)

[Podcast Episode 177: Dog Training Outside The Box: Transfer Of Value Case Study](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 71: Pro Dog Trainer's Secret to Help Your Naughty Dog](#)

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



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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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