

Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

I've got a riddle for you. What's better than 30 years of dog training experience? And I'll give you a hint, it's not 31 years.

00:00:19

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And I want to talk about dog training experience and the fact that so often we put our faith in so called "experts" or "trainers" based on their experience in the trade. And it just makes sense, right? Like, "Yeah, I've been a dog trainer all my life. Therefore, the implication is I know a lot of things. I know more than a lot of other people."

And I want to challenge you and I want you to challenge that thought yourself because you could have 30 years' experience doing the same thing that you did in year one. And in fact, you really have one year of experience and 30 years of repeating that one year.

00:00:59

There's a great book called [Peak by Anders Ericsson](#). And he talks about—there are some professions and he named drivers, doctors, and teachers that it's easy in those professions for people to actually get worse as they get more experience. That the level of expertise they have isn't as high as somebody who would have less experience.

Now, if you're listening to this podcast episode and you are a doctor, a driver, or a teacher, of course that's not you because you're a [growth minded person](#). That's why you're listening to Shaped by Dog. But I bet if you're a doctor, a teacher, or a driver, you can think of colleagues that are doing the same thing they did way back when they first started being a doctor, or a driver, or a teacher.

00:01:48

Because I know I sure can. I see dog trainers, no matter what dog they have, no matter how often they've failed, they will do the same thing and except it's the dog's fault. "He's just stupid." "He's just 'fill in the blank'." "It's the breed. It's a Terrier. It's a Husky." It's never their approach, it's the breed.

So, I want to challenge you to consider does experience automatically equal expertise? Now, Anders Ericsson went on to say something that I think we all know in that, "If you never push yourself out of your comfort zone, you're never going to grow." And that is how people, teachers, dog trainers are teachers, how dog trainers can be stuck in a place that is like a time warp that they're doing the same thing.

00:02:36

There needs to be another word or another phrase like "growth minded experience" that differentiates people who are keen to learn and keen to improve and keen to change and keen to overcome challenges and failures that they may see in their current methodology.

There needs to be a different way to describe them than just as somebody who has X number of years of experience. And Anders Ericsson described them as deliberate and purposeful in their quest for growth.



Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

00:03:04

And I think if you can find somebody, or you yourself become deliberate and purposeful in your quest for growth and your willingness to step outside of your comfort zone, then you will be somebody who maybe only has five years of experience.

I see a lot of our Recallers students who started off as brand-new dog owners, maybe have five years of experience now that are succeeding at a much higher level than people who I've seen who have double or triple the amount of years training dogs. And so, it is possible.

00:03:37

Last weekend, we hosted our [Inner Circle People \(IC Peeps\)](#). That's our mastermind group that I lead. We have a two-day event every year where we just do a deep dive into training concepts. And we had great guest speakers here, if you would like to check them out.

We had [Mary Hunter](#), who was talking about [PORTL](#). We had [Tobias Gustavsson](#), who was talking about drive and puppies. We had [Kamal Fernandez](#), who was talking about reactivity. And we had [Nadine Hehli and Simone Fasel](#) talking about levels of [cooperative care](#). It was an amazing weekend.

One of the things that I said along the way was as a dog trainer, effective experience, which I probably meant like growth minded experience means you become really good at identifying what might happen and even better at reinforcement, so it never does.

00:04:28

And I'll give you an example of that. For people who are brand new to dog training, maybe they have their first dog, their first [rescue dog](#), their [first puppy](#), and they join our [Crate Games](#) program. And they're working through the simple step by step process of Crate Games. Now, invariably at one point they're testing their dog's value for the crate and that dog's going to get out of the crate.

And so, they're going to try and get that dog back in the crate and keep playing Crate Games. The first time you play Crate Games, the dog probably gets out two times, three times, maybe more. Now with the second or third times; they might not get out at all. They might like almost, get to the door and you kind of push them back and get the door closed.

00:05:08

Once you've played it the number of times that I have, the puppies or the dogs, they just don't make mistakes because you become so [good at reinforcement](#) and reading the intention of the dog through the tension of their face or the relaxation of their paws, or are they paddling or they're, there's just so many things that goes into the T.E.M.P., [the TEMP of the dog](#), that you can just reinforce good responses to lead to more relaxation, more keenness, more joy in the process.

And they virtually rarely, if ever, make mistakes. And so, when I train Crate Games with a new puppy, they don't try to get out. They don't try to leave because there's so much joy in the process and the understanding of how to reinforce them so that they don't want to leave.

00:05:56

And so, that's what I would like for you. I was thinking about if I'm presenting this on a podcast. How can, you might have six months of dog training experience, or you might have 16 years of dog training experience. So, how can I help whoever is listening to this episode right now maximize the next year of your dog training experience? And these are the things that I came up with.



Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

00:06:18

Number one is a willingness to step outside of your comfort zone. And what that means is it might be a little scary. Leaving what you know how to do and trying something new. And when you do, guess what? There's a very high probability you're going to be awkward, that you actually might fail.

You've got to embrace that idea. You've got to let go of the idea of perfection because hello, we're dealing with another animal, a dog. So, perfection is not attainable. And therefore, we're all going to make mistakes along the way. It's got to be okay.

00:06:51

That's a big part of being growth minded is that there is no shame. There's no burden of guilt. Our dogs forgive us. We need to forgive ourselves. Be willing to make that mistake and move on. So, number one, be willing to step outside your comfort zone.

Number two, be curious. Be curious about, "Well, I know how I did this before, I wonder what it's going to be like if I do it a completely different way?"

00:07:14

Number three, be present. Be present to the lessons that your dog is sharing with you. Imagine that dog training is like you're making a recipe. You are cooking up a recipe and you're serving it to somebody, a friend. "Hey, can you try this for me?" And they go, "Ooh, you got a little too much nutmeg in that."

00:07:32

So, when we're training, we are putting together a recipe AKA [a training plan](#). We are trying it with our dog. Now, remember people that don't change, they're still stuck in the 1950s way of dog training where we train at them. We do things to them. That's not what we do.

We train together. And so, we present something to the dog, and we [accept their feedback](#). If they say there's too much nutmeg, we accept it and we change our responses. So, how can our dogs tell us feedback on what we're presenting? Their behavior, their responses, and their overall feeling about the training.

00:08:08

Are they ignoring you? Are they going off sniffing? Are they joyful? Are they engaged? Are they learning and progressing? That's feedback.

So, instead of saying, "Oh, that dog is so stupid." or "It's a terrier." or "Can you believe this dog? I've been training this dog for like months and look at where he's stuck." We've got to be willing to recognize that dog's here to help us, that dog's here to help us elevate our game, to become better at what we're doing.

00:08:37

So, accept the feedback. What's too much nutmeg from the dog's perspective. "Uh, you know what? You're putting a little too much pressure on me." "Uh, you know what? You did not give me reinforcement for the right thing in the last few weeks when we were practicing this." So, accept that feedback.

Number four, [work from a plan](#). When you're going to train your dog, have a written plan.



Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

00:08:59

Now, if you're one of our online students, we're giving you those written plans, but you need to watch the video, read the plan, and execute on it the way that we have drawn it up for you. We've had thousands and thousands of our students go through our programs. We know these things will be successful.

Now, am I saying that everything is cookie cutter for dogs? No. You might have to, if you've got a really high, high Border Collie, you might have to dial down some of the joy, maybe give them more food and less high drive action tug, depending on what you're teaching.

00:09:33

Likewise, if you have a dog who's a little bit more reserved and we need to dial up the joy, then you're going to add more animation to your training. So, the philosophy doesn't change. The plan doesn't change just because I'm training a different dog or a different breed of dogs. What changes is my application of that plan. But you need a plan to start.

Number five, [video your training](#) and review your training. Number six, grab your [journal and take notes](#). And your notes are going to be about the success of your training, but also how are you feeling about what went on? "I feel great. It was an amazing session." "I feel like, oh, so energized."

00:10:09

How do you believe your dog feels? T.E.M.P. They're going to tell you, they're giving you that feedback. Are they turning away and saying, "Is it over yet?" Or are they [wagging their tail](#) going, "Is there more?" Remember, we're always going to quit before the dog wants to.

But write that down in the journal, because that's the only way we're going to be able to move the needle on the dog's level of joy, is by writing it down, taking note and saying, "Okay, next time out, I'll do better at that."

00:10:37

And finally, recognize you are perfect. You are amazing because you're listening to this podcast. You're curious, you're doing things for your dog. You are absolutely brilliant. You don't have to be better than you are today.

You just have to be curious to see if you can experiment and if there's places that you can grow. Big growth means you are becoming an expert, not just somebody who's repeating their first year of dog training experience over and over and over again.

00:11:10

Does this make sense to you? If it does, I'd love to hear from you. So, please jump on over to YouTube, leave me a comment on the video, and let me know if you're willing to step outside your comfort zone, not just for today, but on an ongoing basis.

As a habit, become one of those people that are deliberate and purposeful in their practice in order to earn growth mindset experience. And help me come up with a new phrase for that. It's not all experience, right? I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.





Episode: #247

Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

Online Learning

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

Resources:

[Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise by Anders Ericsson](#)

[Podcast Episode 195: Making Your Mind Your Most Powerful Dog Training Tool](#)

[Inner Circle People \(IC Peeps\)](#)

[Mary Hunter Dog Trainingology](#)

[Article: What is PORTL?](#)

[GRITTY K9 – Tobias Gustavsson and Boki Damis](#)

[Nadine Hehli and Simone Fasel: Leben mit Huden](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Cooperative Care and Consent in Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Puppy Essentials with Susan Garrett Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 205: The Hidden World Of Reinforcement For Dogs And Why You Need To Know](#)

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 131: How Would Susan Garrett Plan Your Dog Training Sessions?](#)

[YouTube Video: Dog Training Mechanics Feedback from Tater, This!, Momentum and Swagger \(Learning from Failure\)](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Planning Your Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 133: Become Your Own Dog Training Coach With This Video Strategy](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 157: Dog Body Language: Understanding Canine Communication Signals And Emotions](#)



Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience

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.



Meet Us Online

Website	https://dogsthat.com
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/
TikTok	https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat
LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat
Pinterest	https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/
Twitter	https://twitter.com/susangarrett
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs

