

Breaking Down Dog Behavior Problems: Insights From The Top 10 Frustrations

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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I asked ChatGPT, what were the top 10 frustrations of dog owners worldwide? And it came back an interesting list. I'm sure you could guess what they are. So, in today's Shaped by Dog episode, I'm not only going to share what those top 10 frustrations are, I'm going to share what you can do to help make it better for you and your dog.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And for some of you, today's message will be critically important. There's people that are going to be listening to this podcast that are at their wits end, or potentially they're thinking of rehoming their puppy or their dog because they just feel like a failure.

They feel that they can't reach the dog. They can't help the dog. This podcast episode is for you. Or if you know somebody who you believe is in a similar situation, please share this episode with them. So, let me begin by sharing what ChatGPT believes is the top 10 frustrations of dog owners worldwide.

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So, the number one frustration is dog training. I know that's pretty broad and actually dog training could probably cover seven of the top 10, but dog training in general, I'll leave it up to you. It's your inability to train your dog or you feel like you don't have enough time to train your dog or whatever it is, dog training related.

Number two, definitely related is your dog's behavior. Now, I believe dog training can overcome a lot of dog behavior. Certainly not all of it, but a lot of it, but that's number two, according to ChatGPT.

Number three is concerns you have about your dog's health. Number four, time constraints. Many people might feel a little overwhelmed with all you have to do and how little time you have to do it in.

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Number five is your dog's destructive behavior, which to me, that is both number one and number two, but I digress. That's what ChatGPT said. *Number six and seven relate to the communication barrier between dog and owner.* And that really is all about you understanding your dog's way that they communicate with their body and their vocalization, their eyes, everything.

And you can get a great jump on that one by looking at Shaped by Dog [podcast episode number 157](#). *Number eight, financial strain.* I get it. Owning a dog is an expense. It's getting to be more and more expensive. Feeding great quality food, regular visits to the veterinarian, or if you have an emergency come up, it's a financial strain and that can cause overwhelm and definitely frustration for many people.

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Number nine, again, a dog training inability to set boundaries with your dog. And the number 10, frustration that dog owners worldwide have, according to ChatGPT, I think this one might even be a little higher, *is the guilt and the worry that people have about owning a dog.* Here's what I'm going to share with you. I believe all 10 of those, they're very vague categories, but I believe in most cases after listening to today's podcast, it can get better.



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And I'm saying in most cases, because hey, you might have a legitimate health concern about your dog that we can't help you with until you know some more solid details. So, I'm not going to promise everything's going to get better, but I promise that you can feel better about all of them after listening to this episode.

And you don't even have to be a great dog trainer. You can only apply 10 percent of what I'm going to tell you today. And I promise you it will get better. So it begins with the language that you're using or the language that other people use with your dog around whatever it is that's frustrating you.

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People say to you, "You need to fix that." Or you say, "I have to fix this dog. I have to fix this problem." And fix is an exponential jump. "I need to move from where I am today to a better place in the future. And I want to do it with a wiggle of my nose." Now I do know of one person in my childhood who was a witch on television that could do that.

But other than that, is not going to happen. So, I want you to [reframe your language](#). I want you to reframe how other people talk to you. Now we can't control [what other people say](#), but we can control how we receive what other people are saying.

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So, anytime the word fix or overcome comes up in a conversation about your dog's behavior, you've got to know that that is a vision of perfection. Perfection doesn't exist for any of us. Heck, I'm not a perfect dog owner. I'm not a perfect dog trainer. I don't have perfect dogs. [It's not about perfecting](#). It's about making it better today than it was yesterday.

I think just by hearing that statement, there should be a wave of a little bit of relief no matter what your frustration is. You may not know how to fix it, but making it better takes an overwhelming task and really breaks it down into something that, "You know what, now I feel a little more optimistic about taking action."

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"So, no matter what my dog training challenges are, and I have as many as you, I just take, how can I make this better? How do I make it better than it was yesterday?" Now, better is not measured by exponential jumps. Better is measured by baby steps, baby steps towards a goal. Baby steps towards a place that isn't where you are today.

Better is not fueled by other people's opinions of you or your dog. Better is fueled by two-sided joy. The joy you have in working through this problem with your dog, the joy the dog has while you're working on this frustration. The training of better doesn't begin right in the middle of your problem.

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Think of a frustration or a dog training challenge as a fire. Now, if you wanted to put out that fire, you're not going to jump right into the middle of the fire and try to put it out. That's where the fire is the hottest. You don't want to be there. But if you were working on the periphery of the fire where yeah, it might be warm, but you can you know smolder a little bit of the problem there, you will see improvement.

You will see things get better. So, addressing a dog training challenge has to happen on the periphery, not right in the midst of what it is that you are dealing with. An example of that, your dog is afraid of men. You're not going to take your dog and drag him up to men and ask the men to feed your dog.



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That's going right to the middle. And I promise you, it's not going to be a successful approach. At best, you're taking your dog and having them tolerate taking cookies from another person that they're afraid of. At worst, and what happens a lot of times is the dog just loses their trust in you and they never overcome the challenge of men.

Don't work in the midst of a challenge, we're working on the periphery. And just think about working on the periphery. Doesn't it feel a little bit more manageable? Even though I haven't even give you the strategic approach yet, your whole body can relax a little bit. "Okay, I don't have to do these exponential jumps. I don't have to fix. I just have to work on the periphery. I just have to make it better."

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Better starts with a plan. A plan that is fluid that you can adjust every single day. Now for some of you, you're going to go, "Well, I don't know how to make a plan." We've got a playlist over on YouTube that will give you all you need to know about [how I plan each individual training session](#), or how do I make a strategic plan to overcome a challenge.

Now, I will tell you right now, if you are one of my online students in Home School the Dog or in Recallers, you will have success faster. I'm going to give you an opportunity to join those programs, not because I want to sell more programs.

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You can do this staying on my YouTube channel and working through it. But I know it will happen so much faster for you if you allow my coaches and I to help you with your struggles. I'm telling you this because I want to help dogs and their owners.

And I know I can help you deeper when I can get you immersed in the culture of what we do. Having said that, if you are not in a position where you can join one of our programs, please stick with us on YouTube. There's so much learning that I have for you there. Okay, your strategic plan. It begins with a brain dump.

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A brain dump where you're going to sit down with a pen and paper, and you're going to think of all of the things related to your dog that is frustrating you, worrying you, has you overwhelmed. What are those things?

I want you to rate each thing that you wrote down. Now you might have to come circle back the next day and look at it or something your dog does in the midst of the day go, "I don't have that on my list." You're going to write everything you can. It is a brain dump.

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Number two, is you're going to rate each one of those things on a scale of one to ten. One meaning, 'Yeah, it's annoying, but I'm not going to check into therapy because of it.' Number ten is going to be, 'This has to stop.' Maybe it's threatening the safety of somebody you love.

Maybe it's threatening the safety of people you don't know, or it's threatening the safety of other dogs, or it's threatening the safety of your dog. So, those are tens. Now, if you don't have any of those, you might have a nine. A nine will be, 'I'm at my wits end, I feel like a failure. I feel like I'm not good enough for this dog. I'm thinking I might really should return the dog to the shelter or a breeder or whatever.'



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Nines are, these are red alerts too. Tens are about physical safety for people and dogs. Nines are about, 'I just need to feel better about my life. And I really can't when I have this hanging over my head.'

And then you're going to rate each of those challenge. I've given you what a one is. I've given you what a nine or 10 is. You rate them as honestly as you can for each challenge or frustration that you're dealing with currently.

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Number three, you're going to look at your list and you're going to pick what I call your domino behavior. It will be one of your highest rated problems or frustrations. And it will be a domino that if I can overcome this, a lot of those other things on the list are going to be insignificant or unimportant to me.

Circle that big domino, and that is the frustration we're going to deal with first. You can do the same process with all of your frustrations, but we're going to start with your domino.

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Number four, you're going to describe with specificity the exact frustration we're talking about. And this involves asking a lot of great questions of that problem. Here's the challenge. People generally ask the wrong question. They ask the why. "Why did you do that?" "Why does my dog behave this way?" And the truth is none of us will know that answer unless you are a dog.

None of us will know the why. And people will tell you with great confidence, the reason why your dog did that. But the truth is they don't know. And so, you might go off on a tangent based on their decision of the why. And what if they're a hundred percent wrong? You've gone down a path that may lead you into a worse predicament than you're in right now.

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So, the why is not important. We're going to describe the frustration with questions that give us specific answer. How often does it happen? What time of day? You're going to have to start journaling about your challenge. "Oh yeah, it happened at this time." "It happened at this time." Were there other dogs around?

Describe everything you can about the environment when it happened, the time of day, how far away from eating was the dog. What was the weather like? What was your state of mind? Were you feeling a little bit frustrated with what went on in your life that day? Write down as many descriptors as you can for each event, and then highlight things that are similar. That's going to help give you clues to what you do to make things better.

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Number five. So, your plan is going to focus around the four E's. Enrichment, engagement, education, and exercise. Now for me, I think game playing comes into all of that. So, your plan really should be focusing on games that you would love to play, and your dog loves to play that take you to a better place.

Now, enrichment for me starts off with you present, but eventually goes to you not being present. So, if one of your big frustrations is separation anxiety, then of course, you're going to go to [podcast number 200](#), but you're also going to be working on enrichment exercises that have you out of the picture.



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So, those are your four E's. You are going to create a training plan that has intentional daily training sessions. I know you're going to say, "Susan, I'm too busy. Can you give me 90 seconds?" You're going to plan it when you're sitting, maybe instead of scrolling, you're just going to write up a little bit of a plan out the night before. And it's going to be one, two, three 90 second sessions.

You're going to work on a brand-new skill. And if you're looking for a brand-new skill, you don't know what to train, go to Shaped by Dog [episode number 259](#), where I talked about shaping and there's several great exercises that I encourage everybody to have in your repertoire with your dog.

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So, you're going to plan two, three 90 seconds to three-minute training sessions throughout the day where you're going to be focused number one, on teaching a brand-new skill, number two, on doing something that your dog absolutely loves, like a game that you love to play, and number three, a skill that's super important that you just want to maintain.

So, those are the three skills. You might do all three in one training session. You might only be able to do one in each of your three training sessions. So, you're going to come up with a training plan. And again, I would love to help you with that training plan.

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If you would like to join one of our programs, I'm going to leave a link in the show notes so that you can become a member of our [Home School the Dog program](#). That is a program that is 300 dollars on our website that because you're listening to this podcast right now, I'm going to give you a link so that you can become a member of our program at the greatest discount we've ever offered.

Again, this is an opportunity for you to get the coaching you need. Please let my team and I help. But again, if this isn't possible financially, if this isn't going to work for you, please jump over to my YouTube channel. Because I want the dogs of the world to live in their forever home. I want the people who own those dogs to not be in a place of frustration.

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So, start a daily plan. And I promise you, it may not be perfect, but as long as you're taking intentional daily action, I know you'll be able to make it better. After each training session, I just want you to rate, was that better than the one before?

And it's amazing how the enrichment, engagement, education, and daily exercise will help take what was previously a nine or 10 of frustration and help make it better every single day. Before you know it, you're going to look at where you were because you were [keeping journals](#) listing of all those frustrations that you feel.

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And you're going to look back and go, "I can't believe I was that person." It's not about fixing guys. When I saw that [Prophet at six months old, suddenly was terribly fearful](#) of men to the point of backing up against me or lunging to the end of his leash and air snapping towards the face of those men, I knew, "Okay, I got to make this better."

Better because I want him to be happy, anywhere he goes. It took me three weeks of intentional focused work to make it better, to get to a place where I completely trust him around any men.



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I'm still intentionally working at it because things like confidence for a puppy in the midst of a [fear period](#) isn't something you just check off. It's something that you go, "I find joy in working with you. I find joy in helping get you to a better place."

Now, if you would like more insight into what this all looks like, jump over to my YouTube channel on this episode and write in the comment what it is that you are dealing with.

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Is it confidence? [Is it fear?](#) Is it [reactivity?](#) Is it something else? I will put together another episode that's going to help you as best I can. But again, check the show notes. I would love for you to be a member of Home School the Dog. I know that is the stepping stone for you and your dog to be in that better place.

And while you're over there, please be sure to give this video a thumbs up, share it with your friends. Somebody out there is needing to hear this message today. Let's make sure that all dog owners are feeling heard, that all dog owners know there is promise for you and your dog to be somewhere where you're not today. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

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Resources:

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

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

[Podcast Episode 163: Unsolicited Dog Training Advice: How To Protect Your Confidence And Your Dog](#)

[YouTube Video: Normalizing Imperfection in Dog Training](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 200: Solve Your Dog's Separation Anxiety with FRIDA: Expanding Calm With Functional Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 259: Use These Simple Shaping Hacks To Expedite Your Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 227: My Foolproof Strategy To Overcoming Dog Training Challenges](#)

[Podcast Episode 260: Is My Puppy's Behavior Normal Or Is It Time For Me To Be Concerned?](#)

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

[YouTube Playlist: Fearful Dogs Help with Susan Garrett](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Reactive or Aggressive Dogs: Key Insights with Susan Garrett](#)



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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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