

Frustrated Puppy, Frustrated Human! Strategies For Wins With Puppy Raising

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Today I invite you to join me while we solve a puppy challenge that one of my students is in the midst of right now.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And I have got a little tidbit I'm going to start this podcast episode off with right now. If you in any way are frustrated with your life, with your puppy at this moment, I promise you, you own a puppy that is frustrated.

I'm going to say that once more. If you are in any way frustrated by owning your puppy right now, at this time and space, then you own a puppy that is frustrated. That puppy is living a life where they are craving more clarity.

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And so, that anxiety is expressed in behaviors that's frustrating you. So, let's make life harmonious for both of you, shall we? Today's challenge comes from my Home School the Dog students. I was reading a comment on our classroom where they have a four-month-old puppy and the puppy's afraid of other dogs.

So, there's challenge number one. They can't keep the puppy off their couch, challenge number two. They are trying to walk it on a 15-foot-long line, because I mentioned on a podcast that they should [socialize the dog](#) away from other dogs.

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So, they want it to have freedom, but it's picking up garbage and poop and when they try to get it out of their mouth, then the puppy bites them. So, that's problem number four and maybe five and six and seven. And there's probably a dozen other problems mixed into here.

And so, let's take a deep dive at puppy ownership. So, if you have a puppy right now or you are about to get a puppy like one of our podcast listeners, who her and her son are working through all of the [puppy playlist](#) that I have over on my YouTube channel.

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So, if you haven't yet, jump over to YouTube and start devouring the puppy playlist. There's so much great information there. Raising a puppy, the ultimate goal is that we have a relationship that encircles a cooperative nature so that we aren't forcing that puppy to do anything.

It includes having a calm environment so that the puppy can learn to relax. I'm not promising you will have a calm environment during your life of raising a puppy. And I think when you got a puppy, there was no expectation of that, but it doesn't have to be anarchy.

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The opposite of calm isn't anarchy. It is some lovely behavior interspersed with some puppy chaos. That's got to be expected, right? We have cooperation, we have calm, and we have confidence building.



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All of that is our goal because our goal ultimately is to create a great connection with that puppy. So, the connection we want, the connection we crave, in my opinion, has to include cooperation, building confidence, and creating that calm, so that your life can go on enriched with having a puppy in your house and the puppy is engaged and enriched and loving their life.

If you're frustrated, your puppy's frustrated. So come on, let's move forward with this. How does that begin? So, there's a number of things. Obviously, priority number one is we have to get that puppy potty trained.

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So, let's hope you're off to a great start. If not, check that puppy playlist. So, let's assume your potty training is well on the way.

Now, if we have a puppy that gets on the couch or the furniture and we don't want them on the couch or the furniture, then that's the first tell for me that you're giving that puppy way too much freedom.

So, refer to [podcast episode number 166](#), where I talked about what life is like for me when I have a puppy, how I have a training den. If you refer to [episode number 267](#), I share with you how to set up your own training den.

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A training den can be a small area of a room in your house where you go to, to train that puppy and that puppy knows this is where I train.

If you don't have any way of creating a barrier so that you can have a way that you can train inside a small area of a room, your training den can be a bathroom.

So, a small area where your puppy knows this is fun time, good things happen here. Ultimately, what we want is rehearsals of success. Now, if you're listening to this and you're planning on training your puppy for sports, rehearsals of success, is what you ultimately want when you get into the ring.

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My puppy is 15 months old now. And just today I was thinking, you know what, today hasn't been a great day of rehearsals of success, which probably is why I wanted to do this podcast episode anyway. So, what do I mean by that 'Hasn't been a great day for me.'?

I was training my puppy off and on over the last week to do some weave poles in a sequence. His weave poles have been great, but he has learned how much fun it is to go fast while you're doing weave poles.

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His weave poles just on their own were a really decent speed and he was having fun, and I was thrilled with the performance.

But he thought speed needed to be included in this game, like high, high levels of speed, which ultimately isn't bad, I guess.

But with that incredible speed comes a lot of rehearsals of incompleteness. Of, "I'm going to skip some poles. It's faster if I run alongside and pretend, I'm weaving." Of maybe jumping in the middle. Things he hasn't done for weeks.



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And so, just tonight, as I was eating dinner and I was reflecting back on some of my notes from my training, I'm like, you know what, I've got to go back and just have a solid two or three days of really clear understanding of how to be successful in the weave poles. Rehearsals of success are really important when we're raising a puppy because what gets reinforced grows.

So, it doesn't matter how much you're reinforcing your puppy for being calm at your side. If he's off running amuck, jumping over all of your furniture, shredding your bed sheets, peeing where he wants, these are all rehearsals that if repeated enough will get reinforced to the point where your good reinforcement for the odd behavior in your training session once every couple of days has no hope of impacting both the relationship that puppy has with you and the progress you would like to see in their behavior moving forward.

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So, your ultimate goal should be rehearsals of success. But let's balance that with some realistic expectations of a puppy. So, if you get a puppy from the breeder, they might be eight to 10 weeks old, maybe 12 weeks old, and there will be some established behaviors already.

Some of them will be great if your breeder's done a great job putting effort into teaching things like sit to greet and have fun and enjoy the crate. But they also might be not so great if you have got this puppy from a big litter and the breeder didn't have time to spend with them or the puppy was ignored because the breeder was very busy and maybe it was the last puppy left or yada, yada, yada.

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Whatever. It doesn't matter what you start with. What you have to say is. What do I have now? Do you have a behavior challenge? Like this student mentioned, "My dog is afraid of other dogs." Because you have to balance your expectations and the progress you're going to see.

And you have to manage that puppy's environment so that you mitigate the chance for them to choose inappropriate behavior like chewing on furniture or running across furniture if you don't want your puppy on your furniture. Which I don't think puppies should be on furniture anyway.

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Number one, they could, you know, have an accident on the furniture. Number two, puppies jumping off furniture just isn't safe. You know, whether you have your dogs on your furniture as they grow up, that's fine. If you want to pick your puppy up and hold them on your lap and then put them down, but puppies jumping on and off furniture, you potentially could injure their growth plates.

So, not something I would recommend. So, rehearsals of success. We've got our training den. If you don't want your puppy on the furniture, then you've got them in an ex-pen. You play [Crate Games](#) with them. You've got a routine.

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So, the ex-pen is going to be big enough that you can put enrichment games in there. [Fun food puzzles](#). Things that they can figure out. Scenting games. Oh, that's so good. It tires puppies out. You don't have to take your puppy on a long walk on a 15-foot leash to tire them out.

There is so many things you can do. Enrichment, engagement, scenting, and training. Training, so fun games that you can play that engage the puppy's brain. But I would advise that these be done on a leash most of the time, depending on [the age and the stage of the puppy](#).



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But they should be done on a leash so that you can rehearse success. If it's not on a leash, then the puppy is maybe coming in for one or two rehearsals of getting a cookie, and then they're running off somewhere else. Now, if you're in a small training den, you are managing the environment that way.

So, we've got our training den, or we have a puppy on a leash. We are playing strategic games. If you're in Home School the Dog or Recallers, we're giving you those strategic games. If not, at the end, I'm going to give you something because I want all of you with a puppy or about to get a puppy to really set yourself up for success with that puppy so that you're not frustrated, which means your chances are your puppy is not frustrated either.

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We need to set that puppy up for easy wins. So, let's get back to the 15-foot-long line. If you have a puppy that likes to pick up garbage, which is not unusual, then they don't belong in a 15-foot-long line. What I would do, we want to get that puppy out around other dogs.

I would put the puppy in the car, drive somewhere where there might be dogs. Open the window, you go stand outside the door and then feed the puppy when other dogs come by. Puppy ideally would be in a crate that's high enough up so that they can see what's going on.

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If you don't use a crate, then please at least [have them in a seatbelt](#). If the puppy sees the dogs and gets anxious, some dogs can get protective of their car, but that's unusual for a puppy. Then maybe you're parked too close or you're not using high enough value reinforcement.

So, start your socializing at a distance in the car. Then you don't have to worry about the puppy picking up things from the ground. Now, what we're going to do at home, you're going to go treat yourself to a cheeseburger or something from a fast-food restaurant, where you're going to get some wrappers and you're going to put them on the ground at home.

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And you're going to work just having your dog in [Reinforcement Zone](#) at your side and feeding them, not walking near those wrappers, but they're in their environment. And if they try to bolt towards them, then you're going to back up even further. We want to teach the puppy in your house that garbage isn't to be picked up in your mouth.

So, they're on a leash, you're giving them high value rewards. Try to turn in a circle, a 360-degree circle, end your session, put the puppy away, then go and pick up the garbage. So, that's easy win number one. You had garbage in the environment while you were working with your puppy, yet the puppy didn't get a chance to go out and grab the garbage.

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We're not trying to walk the puppy by the garbage and test. We are saying things will be in your environment and they might even smell good, but you don't have to walk them by.

Now, this student said to me that their puppy does know [ItsYerChoice](#) and will ignore food dropped on the ground, but not garbage. So, let's start playing with garbage in the vicinity, maybe just one piece to start. You can start with just a crumpled-up piece of paper. You don't have to start with something smelly.

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Have a methodical approach to easy wins. Easy wins, makes you feel good. Easy wins, helps the puppy feel good, grows that puppy's confidence and grows your confidence in that puppy. Alright, now let's talk about when you try to take something out of your puppy's mouth they bite you.

So, number one, that may indicate you've tried to take a lot of things out of your puppy's mouth and they're trying to guard it from you. And so, really invest your time in the Bring Me Game. That is a game that teaches the puppy a cooperative retrieve.

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And so, anytime we have an adversarial relationship with a puppy over anything, it's not a good thing. Because everything is a learning opportunity for that puppy. What are they learning? They're learning they're gonna work harder to keep it away from you. They're learning they're going to not let you see the treasures that they have.

So, we don't want that. The Bring Me, put something in my hand is one of the first things I teach my puppies because I want them to know they can earn by bringing me things. That it's never going to be a fight. And if your puppy is resource guarding, then go to [podcast episode number 82](#), where I share how to work through that resource guarding.

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So, what we're going to do, set your home environment up for success. We're going to not be taking that puppy out on a 15-foot-long line. You're going to work on leash in your house, set the puppy up for small wins, and when you can work on leash, just walking two steps in one direction in front of your house, turn around, walk in two steps in the other direction.

In those four steps, that puppy ideally would have got maybe five or six cookies. You're teaching the puppy that the environment isn't as exciting or interesting or doesn't pay as well as you do. Now go back in the house. We are setting that puppy up so one day, yeah, you can walk out where there's garbage on the grass and your puppy's not going to be interested in it.

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Because our ultimate goal is there's wildlife nearby and the puppy is not interested. If your puppy is more interested in garbage than you, they're for certain going to be more interested in wildlife. So, let's take this one hurdle at a time.

Remembering, we want to grow confidence, increase cooperation, create calm, all the time working towards having a connected relationship with your puppy. It is possible if you look for small wins every day, engagement, enrichment, use your training den, do not give the puppy free roam to the house.

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The puppy's going to be in an ex-pen or they're going to be playing engaging games with you, or they're going to be so tired, they're going to be sleeping in their crate. Now, for those of you who are thinking, "Well, where do I start?"

We have just revised our [ItsYerChoice Summit](#), and I would love for you to be amongst the first people to try it out. So, if you would like access to our free ItsYerChoice Summit, where you will learn this critical foundational training game, the step-by-step layers, and all the ways that I use it in everyday life, then click the link that you'll find in the show notes.





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And that will take you to joining the summit. You know, raising a puppy will always have surprises and possibly frustrations day to day, but it shouldn't be a frustrating event. Because remember, if you're frustrated, that puppy's frustrated too. And that should not be the way for any puppy to live.

We want that puppy to live with clarity. We create clarity in the training games that we play with them. The training games that we play with them create a puppy who is engaged, who wants to work with us, and who ends up using their brain in a way that they're just exhausted. They'll sleep more and you get the time to get more done.

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All of these things are possible for anyone. And I would say the starting point for every puppy is ItsYerChoice and our Crate Games Online. And I'll put the link to that one in the show notes as well.

I hope this makes sense. I hope for all of you with puppies, you feel better that you're not alone, that we all get frustrated from time to time. But when you're frustrated, think of who else may be frustrated and then work hard to bring clarity into your relationship with that puppy. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Newly Revised ItsYerChoice Summit:

Jump in now for free and play games of choice: [ItsYerChoice Summit](#)

Get Crate Games Online:

[Crate Games Online](#)

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 246: Susan Garrett's Puppy Socialization Strategies For Raising Confident, Happy Dogs](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 120: The Rhythm Of Life With Puppies And Dogs](#)

[Podcast Episode 267: How To Use A Training Den To Fast Track Your Dog's Success: No Space? No Problem!](#)

[Podcast Episode 278: Food Puzzles: Key Mistakes To Avoid And Strategies To Help Your Dog Best Deal With Frustration](#)

[Podcast Episode 218: Puppy Development Stages And Your Dog's Behavior](#)

[Podcast Episode 164: The Danger of Car Travel For Dogs: Evaluating Your Risk](#)

[YouTube Video: Understanding Your Dog's Reinforcement Zone \(RZ\) with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 82: Resource Guarding in Puppies: When Your Puppy Biting Seems Aggressive](#)



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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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