

The Red Flag Of Dominance Based Training: Why It's Hurting Your Dog And What To Do Instead

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Have you heard the expression, when you're a hammer, everything is a nail? What has it got to do with dog training? Because if you're a hammer, you're looking for something to hit.

And unfortunately, in dog training, there's many different approaches. And I decided it's time I stood up and spoke against those that are asking you to do things that are just unkind to your dog.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And today I'm going to talk to you about a methodology of dog training that's unfortunately very prevalent in society. I'm going to talk about why I believe it might be there, the harm it's doing, and what you can do instead.

There are a lot of red flags when you're looking for somebody to help you with your dog.

But I think the biggest red flag of all is when somebody believes in [dominance theory](#), that a dog is trying to dominate you, or a member of your family, or another dog. Now, dominance theory has been debunked by the American Association of Veterinarians and by many progressive thinking dog trainers worldwide.

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But yet it's still very prevalent. And I believe a big part of it goes back to what I've often referred to here on this podcast, [the belief loop](#). Now, the belief loop starts with a belief.

Now, if you are a hammer, everything is a nail. If you believe that dogs are trying to dominate people on a regular basis, then that is a confirmation bias that you are going to look for when you're in every dog that crosses your threshold, no matter what that dog does.

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The dog that humps their owner's leg, trying to dominate. The dog that maybe grabs your sleeve, trying to dominate. And what it is, it's a filter that clouds your judgment. And that filter, like any belief, it affects your thoughts about what's happening. And then your thoughts create an emotion. A lot of times these dog trainers take it personally.

They allow ego to enter the dog training arena as they try to muscle over these dogs that they believe are trying to do them wrong or trying to do their owners wrong or trying to do another dog wrong.

And they will then get very angry. Not all of them. Some of them are very good at hiding their emotions, especially with the things they show you on camera.

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But they have a belief that creates their thoughts. Those thoughts affect their emotions. Their emotions affect their actions. So, this confirmation bias that dogs try to dominate absolutely controls their dog training decisions. Now, for the most part, when you see these public figures, they are generally men, not always, but often they are men.



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So, they are bigger and stronger than many of the dogs that they're dealing with. And they have a methodology that involves overpowering the dog in some way to get the dog to stop whatever it is that they're doing. Now, dogs, like people, when they're faced with conflict, they will [fight, flight, freeze or please](#). So, a dog that is being muscled over or bullied by a dog trainer, they may respond by trying to go at that trainer.

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Now, a lot of dogs won't. But some will. And they will get muscled up even more. I'm being polite when I say muscled up. It could be a poke. It could be a choke. It could be a zap. It could be a number of different things. It could be an [alpha role](#). I'm not even going to discuss what that is. And so, fight, flight, freeze, please.

Now they can't flight, which is what these dogs would, if given the choice, they would be running for the hills. But they don't have that choice because they're in control of this handler. So, they may or may not try to fight, but what they will very likely do is they'll freeze. They're confused.

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I don't know you. I don't trust you. I don't know what's going on. And then they may just try to please, what is it that this person is doing and what can I do to stop this? And so, this creates the picture that they've solved a problem. Well, many, many times they've just created a worse problem. They've poured gasoline on a fire.

They've taken a dog who very likely has [an emotional issue](#) and that's why they are expressing their emotions the way they are. And you are taking that emotion and you're adding fear to that emotion. That is never a recipe for anyone, any dog, any human, to get better. And unfortunately, it makes for great television.

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It makes for great YouTube. And so, these dog trainers get a lot of views. And the other great thing that is very unfortunate, it's fast. It is fast. Let's stop behavior. And for the visual of what they have captured on TV, it looks like they have stopped the problem. But most often and very likely they have created a new problem.

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Now, if they can convince the owners to repeat the physical bullying over and over again, they may very well just create a dog that just lives in a very sheltered, 'I need to protect myself' cocoon, where possibly the problem that they had might not resurface immediately. It might stay away for weeks or months, highly unlikely, but it might. As long as the owner can follow up with the same bullying.

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Now, if you are a regular listener to this podcast, I know that isn't something that is an option for you. So, I encourage everybody to decide what kind of a relationship do you want with your dog? Do you want one where you will need to on a regular basis, yell, command, pop with a leash, maybe shock, maybe scream, maybe grab, maybe shake.

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I know that if you're a regular listener of this podcast, those aren't options for you, but possibly you're just here passing by, and you would love to get some different input. Now, often these trainers have no credentials in dog training. They will say, "I have trained dogs my whole life and I've got results training dogs this way."



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Well, I've had a brain my whole life, but that doesn't make me an accredited brain surgeon. Dogs are just brilliant, brilliant creatures, and they want to be with people. And so, they will learn to live with your rules, no matter how unfair or ridiculous they may appear to the dog or to the person like me looking from the outside in.

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The dogs are gifts from God that will learn to live in your life. But what if you, like me, believe that dogs are sent to us to help us find our higher self, to help us ascend to be better people, to help us to not just treat dogs with kindness, but to treat all animals with kindness, to treat people in our life with kindness, and to treat ourselves with grace and kindness.

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That is at the top of my belief loop. And so, when I look at a problem with a dog, I will say, number one, and I've talked about this in other episodes here on Shaped by Dog. If I look at a problem I will say, is it an emotional problem? Is there any fear in this dog? Is there any overexcitement in this dog?

Is there stress or anxiety? Is there frustration? Is the dog overtired? If any of these things are present, and honestly, you can only tell by the dog's [body language](#) because unlike these other trainers that I spoke about, one of their biggest flaws is projecting through their ego what they believe the dog is thinking.

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"Oh, the dog's trying to get you!" I'm not going to tell you to project what you think your dog is thinking because none of us know, but what you can do is you can watch body language. And I've spoken about this here on this episode. I'll leave a link in the show notes, how you yourself can become educated on the primary way that our dogs communicate with us through their body language, through their eyes, their ears, their tail, their body, the way they breathe, the way they hold themselves.

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Through all of those communication tools, our dogs will tell us if they're dealing with an emotional issue. Possibly it's a painful issue. And if you have to rule out those things first. Now, if you have said, yeah, clearly this is an emotional issue. It happens when X always happens when the dog sees this, when the dog always sees another dog that's black, when the dog hears thunder, it's an emotional issue.

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Well, then your solution isn't dog training because you can't dog train an emotional problem. Your solution is through [counter condition](#), [generalization](#), [habituation](#). It's possible to make that dog's life more comfortable so that then the opportunity to dog train is there.

So, let's say you've decided the problem that you're having, whatever that challenge is, [could it be jumping](#)? Could it be pulling? Could it be nipping? Could it be stealing? Could it be chasing? I mean, those are some of the biggies. That is your challenge.

Now you're going to say, Susan, I need to stop. Boom. Dogs don't understand stop. They understand a behavior that we can do instead of what they're doing. So, you have your challenge, number one.

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And now we're going to say, where's the value for the dog? The only reason you have this challenge, once we've ruled out, it isn't an emotional problem.



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The only reason it's there is because is because there's some reinforcement for the dog somewhere. You have to dial in, where is that reinforcement? Is that something within your control?

So, if it's chase, yeah, we can control our dogs chasing until we build in a better bond, a better relationship, more value for you, and more value for the behaviors you want the dog to do rather than chase when they see another animal. So, isolating your challenge is number one. Isolating, where's the reinforcement value for that dog is number two.

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Can you stop or control that reinforcement? That's the next question. And then what is an [incompatible behavior](#) that you can train your dog to do that's going to take that option off the table for the dog? So, if we have a dog that's [jumping on guests](#), teaching a dog to get into a hot zone, a dog bed somewhere near the door, removes the possibility of that dog jumping up on your guests.

What is that incompatible behavior? Now, what are the steps that you can take that are going to help build a bond and create the new value for where we want the dog to be? And then you're going to start training. Now, if you're one of our online students, we've got plans for you. If you're not, you [create a plan to train that dog](#).

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But once you feel your training is mostly done, you're going to evaluate that dog in a similar situation. Do they want to jump on your guests? Do they want to chase the wildlife? That dog is giving you feedback on the training because what you trained must be what that dog has learned. They have to be the same thing for you to overcome that challenge.

If they aren't the same thing, then your dog is going to continue to do the behavior you would like to change. And you can't say, "I taught you! Why haven't you learned? Are you stupid or something?" Because dog training is a conversation between two friends. Just because you taught it, doesn't mean they learned what you taught.

Just like as a dog training instructor, I hope that the lessons I taught will create the results that I want for my students. But if they didn't, then what I taught wasn't clear for my students. So, our dog's behavior reflects back what we taught. And if they aren't doing what we taught, then we need to go about teaching what we taught in a different way.

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Does this make sense? I know that sometimes our dog's behavior can be incredibly overwhelming. And so, you've got to ask yourself while you're in the state of overwhelm, while you may be questioning, was it the right thing to do to get a dog? Ask yourself, can I name the problem that is upsetting me right now?

If you can name it, then you can say, can I do something about it immediately? No, then stop worrying. Then the next question is, what can I do to make things better for the future? And if you don't have a plan and you do want a plan, I would like to offer my assistance. First of all, number one, there's more than 400 training videos over on [my YouTube channel](#).

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100 percent free and 100 percent excellent dog training value that will take you to a better place. Now, if you would like more personal coaching from myself and my team, I'm going to give you an opportunity right now. We just finished our big cyber event, but you might be listening to this at a time when it's not a big cyber event.

I would like you to write to my team and say, I'm looking for a new outcome. In the subject line, just put 'New Outcome.' You're looking for a new outcome. My team will then give you an opportunity to join



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our program, Home School the Dog, which will give you step by step games that you can start creating a better outcome and a better bond and a better relationship with you and your dog.

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Normally, this program sells on our website for \$300. But because you're listening to this podcast right now, because you're willing to recognize the red flags of how some trainers view dog behavior through a filter of their own flawed bias and you want something better for your dog, I want to help.

So, write my team and you will get this program at more than 75 percent off. I will offer this to anybody that listens to this episode. I want a better life for dogs all over the world. And I know when we can provide that better life through good science-based dog training that considers the dog's emotional state, that trains in a way that only is got the best interest of the dog at heart.

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Only then can we help each other to ascend to be the highest person we are meant to be and to look through life through a new lens. One that's filled with kindness and love for all. I hope this makes sense. This honestly is the way I look at not just my relationships with my dogs, but my relationships with all of the people in my life.

I believe like the late great Wayne Dyer taught us that everybody is doing the best they can with what they've been given. Just like I believe that all dogs are doing the best they can with the education they've been given in the environment that they've been put in. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Home School the Dog Opportunity:

Write to us at wag@dogsthat.com with the subject line "**New Outcome**"

Resources:

[DogsThat YouTube Channel](#)

[Podcast Episode 46: Is Your Dog Trying to Dominate You and What You Can Do About It](#)

[Podcast Episode 280: The Boost Button For Dog Training Happiness: Activate Your Mind's Superpowers](#)

[Podcast Episode 224: Unleashing Fluency In Dog Training: Cracking The Canine Communication Code](#)

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

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

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Body Language, Communication Signals, and How to Read Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 112: Stressed Dog? How Trigger Stacking Might Be Putting Your Dog Over Threshold](#)

[Podcast Episode 184: Proofing Vs Generalizing In Dog Training To Grow Skills And Confidence](#)

[Podcast Episode 219: Self-Regulation Helping Shy, Hyper, Anxious Or Fearful Dogs To A Better Life](#)

[Podcast Episode 121: How To Stop Dogs Jumping Up On People](#)

[Podcast Episode 16: The Thing Before Your Dog's Thing](#)

[Podcast Episode 109: Project Calm Dog: Prevent Over Enthusiastic Greetings](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Planning Your Dog Training 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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