

Fear Of Criticism? Why Facing The Camera Is The First Step To Becoming A Better Dog Trainer

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Have you ever walked away from a training session thinking, "Why can't my dog get this? Like, I've been practicing, and my dog just isn't picking it up." And it might be super frustrating to you and maybe overwhelming to you with what to do next.

And the truth that some people don't want to accept is it might not be the dog at all. It very likely is something that we are doing. And the only way we're going to be able to fix it is to accept criticism in order for us to improve. And the number one best person to give you that criticism is you.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. You know, our dogs can only grow as much as we are willing to grow. If a fear of judgment or perfectionism, or maybe even some shame is preventing you from videoing your dog training, you might be unconsciously slowing down your dog's progression.

You might be unconsciously holding your dog back from their best life ever. I'm going to preface what I have to say today by saying I am not a therapist. I am a dog trainer, but I'm a dog trainer with a passion for behavior. And that passion for behavior notices behavior in people as well as in myself.

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I noticed really early on in order to help my clients bring out the best in their dogs, I had to be able to inspire those clients to want to bring out the best in them for their dogs. In [our last Shaped by Dog episode](#), I shared that it's pretty well accepted that the number one way to improve your dog's skills is by you videoing your dog training.

Yes, you can get feedback from a coach, but you are going to be training at home where you're not getting feedback from that coach. In the last episode, I shared that 63% of our viewers polled on YouTube have never videoed a session of their dog training.

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And so, I sat down and decided there's got to be a reason. And I shared two categories of reasons. If you haven't watched that, maybe go back and watch that episode. But one of the grouping of reasons was practicality and the other grouping was awareness. Awareness of the value.

And the third category is what we're talking about today. And that is emotional barriers that might be holding anyone back from wanting to video their training. Here's the thing, we all have blind spots. Blind spots about ourselves, blind spots about our dogs. Without self-reflection, without feedback, those blind spots are going to keep us stuck.

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Today, I'm going to talk about what that looks like and how it affects your dog. Plus, I'm going to share with you how we can all reframe those things that have currently got us stuck so we can bust through any obstacles that's preventing us from bringing out the best in our dogs.

So, if you and I were going to spitball ideas, what would be an emotional barrier that would prevent you from wanting to video your dog training? I think some of the answers would be perfectionism.



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The need to set up every angle so 'I'm getting the best perfect angle so that I can see everything the dog's going to be doing.' And perfectionism of 'Oh my, I got to clean up my environment.' 'I want to make sure that my bed is perfectly made the way it is every day.' Not likely.

The perfectionism of you've got to have pressed pants. So, perfectionism might be one. And by the way, I'm going to share with you, when I think about perfectionism, I used to have a program called Puppy Peaks, where I shared my daily training or my weekly training as I raised my puppy Swagger and then my puppy Momentum.

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A lot of that videoing I shot in my pajamas. It was not pretty, but the dog training was excellent, I believe. A lot of people really enjoyed that program. So, I think that's a great example of, 'Hey, it doesn't matter.' You're not showing this to the world. There were actually tens of thousands of people that saw those videos back in the day of me and Swagger doing training when he was a baby.

You've got to be vulnerable. You've got to be okay. For you, no one else is looking at it, but you. So, perfectionism, being self-conscious of what you're seeing, being self-conscious of the way you look, fear of criticism and judgment. It's only you, looking, but you've got that little negative voice in your head.

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And that negative voice is going to be picking out things that aren't going to be pleasant to hear really. It could be a fear of seeing an error in the training because maybe that cascades some shame in you that, "Well, my poor dog, my poor dog is stuck with me and my poor dog is putting up with that level of dog training. And I don't want to see how horrible I am as a dog trainer."

It could be just a lack of confidence. Like, "I'm brand new to training this. Like I'm not a professional. I'm never going to get like, 90% of what I'm going to see is going to be flawed." And that comes back and connects you to the shame, the lack of worthiness.

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Like "What right do I have to even own a dog?" All of these negative thoughts that if you didn't video your training and you wouldn't have to come to the edge of these emotional barriers. I'm sure there's others, and I would love for you to [jump over to YouTube](#) and leave a comment if I'm missing some of the ones.

But before we go dark and deep into a rabbit hole of negative emotions, let's talk about how that negative emotion, whatever it is that you feel, maybe there's more than one is affecting you as a human being.

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Let's talk about how it keeps you stuck. Let's talk about how it's affecting your dog. And I want to talk about how we can reframe that so that you will embrace the consistent [videoing of your dog training sessions](#).

So, let's pick one of these emotional barriers, maybe fear of self-criticism or self-judgment from you. So, you're looking at the video of your training and the first thing you see is, "Oh, I look so horrible in those pants." Or "Oh my gosh, I really have put on weight." Or "Oh my gosh, why did I say that?" Or "Oh my gosh, listen to my voice. It's oh, it sounds so awful, and my nose is so big."



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And the list can go on and on and on and on. And if you're training with us or you're following some of our YouTube videos, that should be a joyous time because we're reinforcement-based dog trainers, aren't we? And we are playing games with our dogs. That should be fun.

But if the event of training of fun is followed up with an event of misery, where your self being so self-critical where there's so much self-loathing when you look at that video, then the old saying reinforcement builds behavior is true. If you're not enjoying looking at the video, there is a very low probability that you're going to do it on a consistent basis.

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Possibly you're never going to do it again. So, how does this self-judgment or self-criticism keep you stuck? You've heard it now that videoing will really help you improve. But you don't want to video because you don't want to see that. And so, what's going to happen, you're just not going to train.

Because if I don't train, I don't have to video. I know I should be videoing if I train, so I'm just going to skip training. Therefore, I don't have video to look at. Now, if you skip training or you train without videoing, both of those options are going to absolutely hamper your ability to improve. You're not going to grow as a dog trainer.

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You know, growth happens outside of our comfort zone. We all know that right? And so, we're going to stick in our comfort zone, not being vulnerable, not looking at ourselves on video. And we're going to stay in our little happy, air quotes there, a happy place where we don't have to look at ourselves on video, where we can train without the video, or we just don't train at all.

So, that's how you get stuck. Now, how does that affect your dog? We all know that our dog needs [consistent growth from us](#) in order for them to consistently grow. There's a reason why my dogs, I think are pretty darn well trained. And I even [hate the word training](#).

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I'd like to say, there's a reason why my dogs and I share this amazing life. One where our expectations of each other are clear. One where my dogs have all kinds of freedom, yet when I say their name, they come flying back to me. That's because of my experience. That's because of my ability to watch video and improve.

But I started exactly where you're starting. And if you are a half decent dog trainer, I started a long way down, several levels down. We all started with our first dog or our first family pet without [understanding our dog's body language](#) or how to positively affect change for that dog. So, when we stay stuck at whatever level of dog trainer we are at. We're affecting that dog and potentially we're hurting that dog because they're going to disappoint you more.

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They're going to frustrate you more. They're going to look for reinforcement away from you. When you train intentionally through a proven plan where the dog earns reinforcement, far, far more often than they make choices that are incorrect, that dog's drive to want to work with you skyrockets.

And so, what can we do? We're stuck. We're [stuck in this cycle of self-loathing](#). First of all, let's talk about vulnerability. Vulnerability is the gateway to self-love.



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Self-love means you can look at a video of yourself and you're going to quiet that negative voice in your head. Let's give that negative talking person a name. You know, Negative Nelly, Negative Nancy, Negative Nobody. Negative Nobody has no right to an opinion. Would you go to Negative Nobody to get some help?

Then why are you listening to Negative Nobody when they're trying to affect your dog training? So, number one, you're going to remind yourself even Susan Garrett started at the bottom. Even Susan Garrett made a ton of mistakes.

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And even Susan Garrett can find things to improve when she looks at training videos today, almost 40 years after she became a professional dog trainer. So, the purpose of videoing our training is to give us clarity. What I really want you to do when you look at that video is not let Negative Nobody tell you all the things that are hurtful.

I want you, first of all, to look for what's good. I'll give you a couple suggestions. Number one, you're training. That's awesome. Number two, you're videoing. Double celebration. Now you're going to pick one to three things that you believe you did well. Honestly, when we're looking at our dog training videos, it's so easy just to focus on the dog, but the dog only improves when we get better.

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So, pick a few mechanical skills of yours and work to get them better without really judging what your dog is doing. If you did that for a week, I promise you your dog will improve. And so, what's the reframe? The reframe is when Negative Nobody starts spouting off to you, you're going to say, "Hold the phone, I've got this."

You're going to remind Negative Nobody, "Even Susan Garrett makes mistakes. I'm okay. I'm going to be vulnerable here. I'm okay at looking at this honestly." Because really, 'I'm not looking at my messy bedroom. I'm not looking at how wide my hips are. I'm looking at a way that to make my dog's life better.'

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Because as much as it may feel uncomfortable to watch yourself make mistakes with your dog, video is a mirror into your dog's experience with you. And the only way you can make that experience a better one is for you to be vulnerable enough to say, "I'm going to embrace this. I'm going to watch this video. I'm going to see where I can get better."

So, no matter what the emotional barrier that may have you stuck right now, I encourage you to allow yourself the vulnerability to say, "How is this affecting me as a human being on my growth to ascending to becoming the best kind of person?" "How is this emotional barrier affecting me, affecting my life, affecting my ability to live out my purpose, affecting my ability to deliver the best life possible for my dog?"

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So, that's number one. How does it affect you? How does it impact your dog? And what would be a possible reframe? Now, if you can't think of a possible reframe yourself, I want you to jump over YouTube and leave me a comment and my team and I are going to help you reframe what emotions you're feeling when you look at yourself on video.



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In 2025, I want to see you breaking through these emotional barriers. I want you to become a friend of you. You are enough. You are worthy. Please give yourself that grace. Imagine this, imagine if Susan Garrett gave you a video of her training. Maybe early Susan Garrett training. And I said, "Can you give me some feedback on my mechanics?"

And you looked at it and it was horrific, that she was missing opportunities to reward her dog. She was turning her back on her dog and her dog was sniffing as a result of feeling disconnected. She never once got the timing right of marking good behavior or delivering the reinforcement.

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If you saw all that on a video that I gave you and said, "Can you help me with my mechanics?" Would you look at that video and then say to me, "Susan, you really suck."

"Do you realize how much you are hurting your dog? Like, how could you be so stupid that you keep repeating the same mistake every freaking time? Give your head a shake, Susan. Like, really?"

Would you say that to me? Would you say that to any friend? Then why don't you extend the same grace to you. Please extend that grace on my behalf. Please don't let the thought of videoing your training hold you back.

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Fall in love with connecting with your dog through reinforcement-based dog training. Because if you make a mistake with reinforcement-based dog training, guess what happens. Your dog just gets an extra cookie.

And guess what? We can fix that by giving them cookies in the opposite direction to really get what we want. If you're unsure where to start with your dog training, then I would love you to send my team a note at wag@dogsthat.com with the subject line, 'Self-Love.'

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And we will send you a link to enroll in our Home School The Dog program at 83% off the current retail price. By being a student in our online programs, we will help you through the process of videoing your training.

We will help you accelerate your learning so that when you're looking at the videos, you are seeing your dog progress over time.

And so everybody listening to this podcast, I encourage you, let's freaking go. I want you to set up the camera. I don't even care if it's the perfect location for the dog training. Don't overthink it. Set up the camera.

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And the first thing I want you to do is walk in front of it and say, "Hey there, beautiful soul, just want you to know. I love you. And we're going to do this now."

And if proclaiming self-love is too difficult for you at this moment, I want you to say, "Hey there, beautiful soul. Do you know that someone loves you?"

Because it's true. I, for one, love each and every one of you who is doing your best to use reinforcement-based dog training to bring out the best in your dog.



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Who are striving to give your dog the best life without using intimidation or tools that may potentially hurt that dog. It makes no difference how long this first video training session is. It could be less than a minute. What matters is that you are allowing yourself to be vulnerable.

That you're saying, "I am worth it. And my dog is worth it." You're getting yourself in front of the camera because that's the pathway to improvement. Because all of this focused intentional training that you are capturing on video is going to be what leads you and your dog to having that better life together.

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If you've never videoed before, the first time you do it, please jump over to this video and leave a comment and let me give you a heart and say, "I'm proud of you." I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

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Resources:

[Podcast Episode 294: Survey Shows 63% Of Dog Owners Currently Don't Use This Essential Dog Training Tool](#)

[DogsThat YouTube Channel](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 247: Redefining Expertise In Dog Training And What Counts More Than Years Of Experience](#)

[Podcast Episode 28: Why It Hurts Me When I Say "Dog Training"](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 287: The Power Of Perception: Reframing Dog Training Setbacks Into Successes](#)



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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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