

When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

A common question our online students ask of us is, "What can I do when I get stuck?", "What can I do when training just doesn't work?", "What can I do when I don't know what to do?" And if you've ever been in that situation, I think you're going to like today's podcast.

00:00:28

Hi, I am Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And I've done several podcast episodes where I've talked about plan B. Like in [episode number 228](#), where I talked about training a dog that I was getting failures that I didn't expect and what I could do. You might want to refer back to that episode for sure.

I want to talk to you today, though, about why you might get, like, this breakdown in your training, what you can do about it, and how to train to minimize this. First off, what I'm going to say is you are going to get frustrated from time to time. The amount of frustration is really dependent upon your level of experience.

00:01:12

Now, if you're in one of [my online programs](#), I should have created such a perfect training protocol for you, that it virtually never happens. And if it does, occasionally happens, we have coaches that you can say, "Look at this is what I'm doing, and this is what I'm getting."

But, if you're not in one of my online classrooms, I just want to make sure that you are following a strategic protocol. So, I'm going to tell you just an overview of what I think training looks like. If you have been listening to [Shaped by Dog](#), you know I value three big groups of skills.

00:01:45

First off, when I get a puppy, when I get [a rescue dog](#), I want to spend a big part of my time investing in our relationship. The recall, the retrieve, and [Reinforcement Zone](#). Reinforcement Zone comes a little bit later. So really, the big three are upfront: our relationship, the dog learning the name, and the dog, you know, learning how to fit into our house.

So, relationship, recall—the most important thing you could ever teach a dog—and retrieve. Retrieve because it's just so valuable both for training and for building a deeper and a stronger bond in that relationship. And Reinforcement Zone well, because we all will love to take our dogs for a walk, so that makes it easy. So those are the three biggies.

00:02:28

But I'm going to share with you a bunch of little exercises that I think, if you aren't sure what to do in your training, if you've got these, they give you a good place to start. Number one is my [ItsYerChoice Game](#).

And if you check out the show notes, I'm going to give you a link where you can join my ItsYerChoice Summit, 100% free, so that you too can play this amazing game. So, ItsYerChoice is a foundational game so important because when you're training your dog, has this ever happened to you, where the dog gets so obsessed on the reward you want to use.



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:03:03

Whether it be food or you've got a tennis ball, or you have a tug toy and all they're doing is just like staring at the food or the toy and they can't really think about what it is you want. You know, somebody left a comment for me just yesterday. [I did a live stream](#) where I took Kim's seven-month-old puppy, Waffles.

And I was going to do a little demo about a game that I'm going to talk to you about today actually. It's about Perch Work. And Waffles is a rescue puppy who is a mix of American Bully, American Bulldog, German Shepherd, there's some Husky, there's some Malamute way back there. It's a lot of combination of interesting breeds.

00:03:44

Now, the comment that came to me was the fascination of, I started training with this puppy by tugging a toy, but then I just tossed the toy down and had him work with me and couldn't believe that this seven-month-old puppy who wasn't even my puppy could ignore that toy that he just found great value in and continue to work.

So, I think understanding how ItsYerChoice is part of a relationship with your dog is asking yourself, where's the value? And you start with food, but that ItsYerChoice grows to all the things that the dog loves. Whether it be tugging with a toy or going to greet somebody—if they love greeting—that is a choice that we help build our relationship by, that goes through us with the cue “Go see.” Now you can go and visit Grandma.

00:04:33

So ItsYerChoice, and then [Hand Target](#), super important one. And it's very strategic in the way we teach it that the dog is looking at the hand and not looking, “where's the food, where's the food, where's the food?” ItsYerChoice is always in play, right?

Crate Games, of course. It's just such a valuable foundational piece to build the dog's— not only their comfort in their crate, but also their drive out of their crate, that they learn things like self-control. You don't have to like collar correct them or tell them “No,” or “Ah-ah, stay,” or “wait.” They learn all that through Crate Games. Amazing.

00:05:06

So, these are all the instrumental pieces of a great training session. Relaxation Protocol. I often skip over this. I talked about it in [podcast episode number 191](#). I go over exactly how you can train it with your own dog. So very important.

Yes, I talked about it under the guise of [Pedicure Please](#). But we need a dog that will relax in any environment and yes, it can be a trained behavior. And then Tug Games. We've got a dog who can relax. We also need a dog who will tug. And again, that tug becomes a reinforcement that we can use in training.

00:05:41

And I would say then the last two that I would say are super important are Hot Zone, which is the dog hopping it up on a bed, which is super easy to teach when you've got great [Crate Games](#). Because the dog understands the framework of ‘criteria is joy.’

That's what those of us who want to train without intimidation or fear, we want our dogs to understand criteria is joy. It isn't a case of ‘do it, damn it.’



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:06:11

Don't get me wrong, when I ask my dogs to do something, they do it, but they don't have any kind of threat behind me requesting them to do something, whether it be, sit, down, a trick, a game, bring me something, it doesn't matter what it is.

So, we want that criteria, the dog to understand that it's very black and white. Yes, you can't get out until you hear this release word. But yes, I want you to come out with a lot of joy for work. That's what we want in Hot Zone. And so, teaching it through Crate Games is just such a great, great way for the dog to learn.

00:06:44

Of course, I'll leave a link in the show notes for you to join our Crate Games online. And the final piece is Perch Work. Probably one of our most popular videos over on YouTube is [Perch Work \(Pivots and Spins\)](#). I know I've given you a lot of different references here to start this episode off. But it's super important, because what I want is for you to have a training session that minimizes frustration for both you and your dog.

So now let's jump over to what the training sessions look like. The very first thing we're going to be doing is we're going to establish a place to build confidence with our dog. So, I call it a ['training den.'](#) Every new behavior that you're going to start training starts in that training den.

00:07:28

Now unfortunately, people get a new puppy or a rescue dog and what is the first thing they do? They sign up for a local class. Not the best place, probably one of the worst places to try and teach a dog.

Please immerse yourself in our [puppy playlist](#) or in any of the [videos over on YouTube](#) to teach your dog in a comfortable environment where you can control the distractions, where you can control how relaxed you are, where you can control your own hunger level, or the timing for the timeline of the day or during the day, during the week where you actually train your dog, start at home.

00:08:06

In-person classes are phenomenal. Great social environments, great for you to meet new people, but it's a place you take your dog to show off. It is not a place you take your dog to learn. It is not a great learning environment. And that's why our program Home School the Dog is just such a popular program because people get to help that dog be educated in a place of comfort.

Okay, so you've got a training den. It could be a small room. If you have a one room apartment, you're just going to corner off a little room. You can use an ex-pen, baby gates to make a little area. That when you go in that area, your dog knows 'something amazing happens because I'm learning about criteria.' And criteria is what? Criteria is joy.

00:08:51

And within that den, that [training](#) den, that's where you are going to number one, introduce your dog to [different value reinforcements](#). Now you're going to do it in the case of training. Maybe you are going to start with ItsYerChoice or Hand Targets.

You're going to teach your dog a game, but you're also going to learn what does your dog value? What is a good treat? What is a great treat? Please do not be that person who just trains with boring old kibble. Boring old kibble has a place if you feed it to your dog.



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:09:23

You can use freeze dried raw if you don't want to use boring old kibble. But all of us have a baseline food reward, which is valuable enough that the dog says, "Yeah, I'll work for that in distraction-free environment." But they're not going to knit you a sweater because they're really excited about what you've got.

So, we need to know what is okay for your dog, what is exciting for your dog, and what is, 'Oh my gosh, what have you got there? I want it. I will do whatever you want, and nothing can distract me because I love what I smell.'

00:09:57

So, three different levels of food. We want to establish in our training den, and in a distraction free environment and in a distracted environment, which food is valuable. And when there's distractions, I bet those boring treats the dog won't even look at. There's no way they're going to sniff or even eat them.

So, know that about your dog. Establish value. Now we've got to transfer value. So, we're going to take some of the high-value food when you're training, we're going to mix in some boring ones, and make sure your dog eats them so that the value of the high-value gets transferred to the lower value. And you get to a place where I am with my dogs.

00:10:37

It doesn't matter what I pick as a food reward. They love it all. Sure, there's things that I know I can pull this out and it's really a good one. But you think of things like, for my dogs, it's the meat that gathers in the broth when we're making bone broth. We scoop all that meat off, and we freeze it into little chunks and oh my gosh, that is the highest value reward for my dogs.

Things like venison, super high value. Chunks of chicken. So, you know, by trial and error, what your dogs love, and you've got to save those. Don't use those for everyday training—that's how you take high value, and you make it boring. You've got to know, and you've got to understand the value of your reinforcements.

00:11:19

Because the next part of training is we're going to transfer that value to toys, to other types of food reinforcement, to places, to—yes—you. That's what training is about: transferring the value. So, you're in your den, you're playing games—ItsYerChoice, Hand Targets—these games are transferring value to you, and you're going to notice at first, your dog might stare at the treats.

But if you play ItsYerChoice to begin every session, your dog's going to soon they're going to go to a place of, "Oh my gosh, what are we doing today?" They know they have to earn the reinforcement. So now we're into a stage of training where we're just creating clarity for a behavior, for Hand Targets, for Crate Games, for Hot Zone.

00:12:02

And in the midst of that training, the dog might get frustrated and when they're frustrated, they're going to [show anxiety](#). That anxiety might be expressed by them sniffing or getting hyperactive. There's a number of different ways they're going to do it.

That's going to frustrate you. You're going to probably grab their collar and bring them back to training, try to get them going again and it's not going to work. And ugh, this is going to be a disaster, isn't it?



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:12:24

Here's what we're going to do. You've got to know, there's a great quote by marine mammal trainer, Paul Chance, about frustration. And he says, 'Frustration is an adverse emotional state which brings along potential unpredictability.' You can see it in your own animals. Sometimes they get excited, they get frustrated, they start redirecting at you.

Sometimes they vocalize. Sometimes they just curl up a ball and suck their thumb. I mean, if the dog had a thumb, they would suck it. But what they would do is if they just get low, like my dog This!y used to do, just kind of sniff and walk around. That is their expression of frustration. We never want training to get to that point.

00:13:04

My mentor Bob Bailey always said, 'When training is right, it's easy.' And so, you've got to find that sweet spot and that is when you have a great training plan, you know what you're doing, [you have a plan](#), you've got your [video set up](#), you've set a timer so that you know that if you followed a training plan and things are going well, you know that ease.

But it doesn't happen that way all the time. And when it does, we don't want to keep training. We never want to take our dog and bring them back to training. Our dog showing you that frustration is a sign something's gone wrong. Pump the brakes, what's gone wrong? Because we were here, we were growing clarity, and then we were growing confidence and all of a sudden, our dogs just wanted to check out.

00:13:51

So, the best thing you could do then is just put your dog up on the Hot Zone or put them in the crate and give them a couple of cookies, close the door. Now we don't want to get to that place in our training. "But Susan, my dog just left me and sniffed, and you want me to give them cookies?"

Yes, I do. Because at the end of the day, they were giving you feedback on your training and you're saying thank you for that feedback. And you want to prevent it from happening again. So, you look at your video. How long was that session? "Susan, it was five minutes." What's the longest you'd worked prior to that session? "Oh, I think 90 seconds." Yeah, that's unfair.

00:14:24

Because duration is a distraction. Distraction is a challenge. Are we in the confidence growing phase of training? Then we're not throwing challenges to the dog. Challenges is a stage after confidence growing, isn't it? And so, when your dog leaves you, you're going to re-evaluate the training you did.

You're going to re-evaluate your training plan and you're going to try to deduce what was the feedback your dog was giving you. When do we add challenge and how do we add challenge? So, your dog might fail because you jumped the criteria too high. The dog might have failed because you added too high of a distraction.

00:15:02

Or you added too much excitement to the training, or you tried to grow the duration of something too far, too fast. You tried to get too much distance between the dog's reinforcement and you. There's a number of reasons why the training fails. Sometimes the training fails because 'I want it to.' Because my dog's got so much reinforcement, and I want to test the resiliency of the dog. But mostly I want to test how well you know this. Nine times out of 10 when I want to test, my dog just shows me 'I got that.'



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:15:34

Like green eggs and ham. Can you do it in a box? Can you do it with a fox? And my dog says, "I can do it here and there and I can do it anywhere." But you've got to take that in a step-by-step process because here's what happens. So, when I tell people add a distraction, they might have been working on their knees with their dog, and suddenly they go across the room.

Well, that's too much of a distraction. You both stood up and moved away. That's unfair. Or I say add a distraction and they take something that was in the confidence growing phase and put it in the backyard with the squirrels.

00:16:06

Way too high a jump, way too high a jump. It's unfair. You're going to get failure. You're going to get frustration. And every time the dog gets frustrated, they're learning how to get frustrated faster. So, you want to take this on board and say, "Okay, I'm going to be better for you. I'm going to be attentive. I'm going to have my poop in a group." so to speak.

Meaning I'll have all my training aids ready. I'm not getting my dog out of their crate until I've got my plan. I know what I'm going to do. It's written down right here. What is the criteria that means joy? How is my dog going to learn that? Have I manipulated my environment so it's clear to the dog?

00:16:44

Have I minimized the distractions in my environment? So, the challenge is out of the way because we are in confidence growing. We're not in challenge growing. And so, when Susan says, "Now, add a distraction." I know I'm going to go from sitting to standing.

Or I'm going to go from doing it for 10 seconds to doing it for 15. Or I'm going to go from asking my dog to back up one step to asking my dog to back up two steps. Or I'm going to move from my training den to outside of the training den or to even a different room of the house.

00:17:15

Those are adding small challenges that the dog can grow even more confidence saying, "Yeah, I can do it here and there. I can do it anywhere." And you want to do this in ways that the dog is telling you, "Look at me. I'm a big show off. I can do this."

Not in ways that they go, "Oh, I'm never going to get this. I'm just such a failure. This is awful." We don't want your dogs to feel that. Because as I've also heard Bob Bailey say many times, "If your dog training isn't working, it isn't right."

00:17:48

And so, what I need you to do is take a pause. It can be a P-A-W-S or a P-A-U-S-E. Take a pause. When things appear to be breaking down in your training, take a pause. Have your dog hop it up in the Hot Zone. Have them go in their crate, throw them a couple cookies and make some notes.

Because, I know for me, whenever I give my dog a reinforcement, I say, "[What was that cookie for?](#)" If my dog just was overcoming anxiety and I had to stop my session, I'm going to give the dog some cookies, but I'm going to mark that down because I'd rather not have to do that again.

How do I prevent doing it again? By not frustrating my dog to the point where they want to leave. Listen, failure is a part of learning. Failure creates a little bit of anxiety, but that little bit of anxiety creates resilience to failure.





Episode: #301

When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

00:18:37

And so, when my dogs fail, they come back with more excitement, with more intensity for, "Oh, you got me on that one. Okay, come on, try it again. Try it again." That's what we want from our dogs. But you have to get there incrementally and know if your dog leaves work, if your dog gets too excited, if your dog can't focus, check the environment.

Is it a learning environment? Is it supposed to be a confidence building stage and you've thrown them into the deep end of a challenge phase? Which unfortunately all in-person classes are going to be for a new dog and owner team.

00:19:11

Build that confidence at home and then take the show on the road because that's a new environment, that's a new distraction, that can grow anxiety to the point that adds excitement to the behavior, but it can also be a disaster for both you and your dog.

I hope this makes sense. Let me know. Leave me a comment. And I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Special Discounts To Join Or Gift Our Online Programs

[Check out our 300th Episode & 5th Anniversary Celebration Page](#)

ItsYerChoice Summit:

[Learn How to Play ItsYerChoice](#)

Crate Games Online:

[Get Crate Games Online](#)





Episode: #301

When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 228: Navigating Failure In Dog Training: What's Your Plan B?](#)

[Susan Garrett's Shaped by Dog Podcast](#)

[Podcast Episode 255: Rescue Dog Training: Priorities For Your First Week Together](#)

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

[Live Stream Replay: Celebrating 300 With A Week of Positivity & Learning](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Target Training for Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 107: Pedicure Please: 3 Steps To Dog Nail Trimming Or Grooming Success At Home!](#)

[YouTube Video: Susan Garrett's Perch Work Dog Tricks \(Pivots and Spins\)](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 257: How To Use Your Dog's Favorite Reinforcements To Fix Unwanted Inadvertent Behaviors](#)

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

[DogsThat YouTube Channel](#)

[Podcast Episode 257: How To Use Your Dog's Favorite Reinforcements To Fix Unwanted Inadvertent Behaviors](#)

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

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

[Podcast Episode 295: Fear Of Criticism? Why Facing The Camera Is The First Step To Becoming A Better Dog Trainer](#)

[Podcast Episode 256: What Was That Cookie For?! When Positive Reinforcement In Dog Training Goes Wrong](#)



When Dog Training Doesn't Go As Planned: How To Make Adjustments And Find Success

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

