

# The 30 Second Reset - Because Your Dog Knows

### Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

### Transcript

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I think this is a topic that is rarely, if ever talked about in dog training, but it is the one thing that affects each and every dog owner on the planet. Everybody who's attempting to communicate or train your dog will be affected by this.

Hi, I am Susan Garrett and this is Shaped by Dog where dog training makes sense at both ends of the leash. Today I'm going to talk about something that I probably am not entirely qualified to speak on. However, I'm going to share my perspective on the topic because emotional resilience. And I'm not talking about resilience in competition. I'm not talking about swallowing your emotions and trudging through something. I'm talking about emotional resistance in your relationship with a dog when you're trying to train.

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Because our nervous system is probably the strongest antecedent in [the ABCs of dog training](#) that there could possibly be. Far more powerful than any meatball that you could give your dog. Far more powerful than any training plan that you could come up with, and definitely far more powerful than any tool or trick or hack that you might be thinking of employing in your dog training.

So, what do I mean by the phrase of emotional resilience? It's the ability to adapt in stressful situations or overcome powerful emotions. Or deal with challenges in a way that doesn't create permanent overwhelm in your system. And why did I choose to talk about this today? Because when I read comments from the students in our online community, I see it woven as an undertone in every single comment.

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There may be somebody talking about losing their job and then saying, "This is what I've been doing and why it's not working." There may be somebody talking about they unfortunately just lost their spouse, and then this is why dog training isn't working for them, and they're not realizing the impact of the dysregulation of their nervous system and what it has on the dog and on their ability to train their dog so therefore, they're not giving themselves the grace to be okay with not being perfect today.

So for us who are training a dog, emotional resiliency is the ability to feel emotions when things aren't going perfectly swell with our training, but to feel frustration, to feel disappointment, and maybe even to feel anger without that affecting the way we look at the dog, or that we approach the training session moving forward.

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This doesn't mean we don't feel the emotions, and it doesn't mean we ignore the emotions. It just means that our emotions are not going to completely overtake the training session. So emotional resilience in dog training is being okay with feeling whatever emotion comes up within that session without letting that emotion completely ruin the session. Now, I said, this isn't something that I am perfectly qualified to talk about because I am not a psychotherapist. I do not have psychological training, but I'm here to share the strategies that I use when I'm feeling overwhelmed with emotion and in the midst of training a dog.



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Now, if you are a regular here to Shaped by Dog, I would've touched on this session in [Shaped by Dog episode number 230](#) where I was sharing my experience shortly after I lost my very special Jack Russell Terrier Twister. And I needed to train my young Terrier mix DeCaff, but I just couldn't. And it wasn't like the day after I couldn't train her, it was like weeks went by.

And not only could I not train her, I found a difficult time even relating to DeCaff, which of course I knew there was still grief remaining from losing Twister, but the guilt I felt about not training DeCaff was now leading to a place of shame on top of the guilt. My nervous system was completely dysregulated, and I didn't know enough to give myself grace or how to find my way out.

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So, as I mentioned in that episode, I started with a strategy which was just about connecting with my dog. I strongly encourage you to go back and listen to that episode because I think that in one way or another, you'll be able to see yourself in a similar situation. It may not be about grief. It may be about things that you wish you hadn't done.

Regardless, we're in the moment and what do we do. Well now, having trained dogs for 40 years, having experienced pretty much all of the emotions, having come from a place where I blamed my dogs and used a lot of corrections when I believe they should have done something different, and getting to a place today where my training is all about reflecting on the antecedents that I presented to the dog and how I could help them be successful by altering my behavior but yet still emotions will come up in my training.

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Now, you might be saying, "Well, let's just get on with some dog training Susan. Why do we have to talk about this resilient stuff?" Because when we are not emotionally resilient, we end up blaming or judging or changing the tone of the words that we're using. Maybe changing the intensity or our facial expressions or the stiffness to which we move when we're interacting with the dog. Or maybe even gritting our teeth when we want the dog to play.

There are little tells that creep into our physical body that is sharing our emotional state with our dog. And guess what? Dogs are brilliant even before we have to escalate our tells, the dog knows. And the funny thing about it all is we might be escalating because we feel that the dog is maybe not trying hard enough or just knows it but is choosing not to or is giving into a distraction.

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We might have decided why the session is going south, when truthfully the distortion is probably in something that we've done. And this is why emotional resilience is so incredibly important because dogs read us like a book. They feel those emotions. They absorb that energy. They don't analyze the words we're saying. They don't understand English, but they feel the tension. They feel that energy. They feel the disappointment. They feel the frustration.

They absorb it all. They package it up as behavior and bring it back out to us, which of course doesn't improve that training session, does it? We see that energetic shift in our dogs in the midst of the training, and that often escalates whatever emotion that we are feeling. Because it's easy to interpret the shift in what the dog is doing and the shift of the dog's behavior in either "Aha, he knows he's not doing what I want.", or "Yeah, here, here we go again. More of the same, more of the disobedience, more of not getting what I need, like why does this always happen to me?"



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And that's the loop. And that's why I set off the top that our nervous system is the strongest antecedent that we add to our dog training. So let me share with you three things that I do routinely when I feel that I'm not dealing with emotions. Now I'm not talking about overwhelming crippling emotions. That when my husband passed away, I wasn't about to start dog training the next day.

I definitely was spending time with my dogs, but I was spending my time with my dogs without any outcomes in mind. So, what I'm talking about, I think everybody listening to this episode can relate to. It's the times when things are not going well and your hands are on your hips, and you just don't know what the next step is.

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So, I'm going to give you an example, a recent example. I am preparing for our Canadian World Team dog agility team tryouts. They happen about two weeks away from now, and I'll be participating in this event with my two-and-a-half-year-old Border Collie. Now he's two and a half. He's still very young as far as agility goes, but yes, he's very, very talented.

As a team, we're very, very young, so we still have teamwork to develop. I've been putting in the work. I've been working on a lot of different elements, yet often when I go to bed at night, after a day of work, I put my head on the pillow. I go to close my eyes, and then I'll get a wave of emotion.

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Generally, it could be something like anxiety, possibly fear of "I haven't done enough. I'm not on schedule, I'm falling behind. I don't have enough time." Now, 20 years ago, that would've kept me up half of the night. Let me share with you three things that I do, and it doesn't matter if I'm in the midst of a training session or I'm trying to fall asleep at night. It works just the same for me.

So, the first strategy comes from Dr. Dan Siegel, and I think the catchphrase he uses is "Name it to tame it." So be honest with yourself and just name the emotion you're feeling. So, when I'm lying there trying to sleep, what is the overwhelming emotion I feel, and I think about it and I say the emotion.

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You don't need to say it out loud, you can say it in your head. Sometimes just naming it helps to dissipate it. Within a minute or a minute and a half, it's gone. So, when I name the emotion, I don't say "I am anxious." I say, "I'm feeling anxious." It's not, "I am afraid." It's, "I'm feeling afraid." Because now I've named it as an emotion and all emotions can pass. Emotions are waves. They don't have to stay with us. They can keep moving on.

"I'm not anxious. I'm feeling anxious." "I'm not angry. I'm feeling angry." So now that I've named the emotion and I've appropriately distanced it from who I am, I go to the second strategy, and it's a simple one that may or may not work for you. And honestly, I do this both with my eyes closed and my eyes open.

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So, here's the strategy. You keep your head looking straightforward. You turn your eyes to the right, and you hold them there for 15 seconds saying nothing, doing nothing. Just hold them as far to the right on the horizontal or slightly up that you can. And after 15 seconds. Keep holding them there and then take a deep inhalation through your nose and a deep exhalation through your mouth. For me, that often triggers a second longer inhalation as my body is giving a release.



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So, first is naming it. The second is looking to the right which talks to the left-hand side of the brain, if you really need to know, I'm sure Dr. Google will tell you why this may work for you. That allows a shift in my energy of my body. So now the tension I was feeling from before I named the emotion is pretty much gone.

The third thing that I'll do, and quite honestly when I'm doing this at night, because I can't sleep, I never get to step three. I never get to step three because the first two steps work so well for me. So, the third thing is the reframe.

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And I've [talked about this before on the podcast](#). I learned this from life coach, Tony Robbins, and he talks about it's not truly the events that happen to us in our lives. It's the meaning we give to those events. It's the stories we tell ourselves about those events. So, you might be walking your dog and your dog barks at a passing dog.

Now you look at that dog and go, "Oh my gosh, my dog is reactive. My dog's becoming reactive. What's going to happen next? I'm going to have to walk him on a muzzle. He's going to be lunging out. I've got kids. The kids bring their friends over. This is going to be a problem."

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Or maybe you've been busy working on your dog coming when they're called, but it's raining out and they're digging in the garden, and you call them and they choose not to come. So, then you create a story about, "I knew I shouldn't have got this dog. I don't know, it's a rescue dog and I don't know the history. And obviously it's a stubborn dog and this is always the way it's going to be, and my dog's never going to learn to come when he's called. I've been giving him treats for six months for coming when is called, and now he's deliberately choosing not to. This kind of training clearly isn't going to work for this dog."

Is any of that true? Your brain can 1000% believe it's true. I could carry on with this podcast episode helping you to believe it's true, but it's not reality. It's a perception of a reality. It's a story that we told ourselves.

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We looked at some data. The data was 'dog barked.' The data was 'dog didn't come when called.' The data could be 'my dog knocked a bar in agility.' But the story that we tell ourselves keeps that data locked into a negative place to repeat over and over again when we're trying to fall asleep at night. Or we'll tell a friend the story and that keeps that story alive.

It's not the events that happened to us. It's the meaning we give those events by the story we assign to the data. Emotions as I said earlier, they're waves, they pass, but the story that we attach to the emotions, that's what keeps us locked in that emotion long term. It persists, it comes back, it resurges.

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Behavior is data. Meaning is a judgment clouded by your own biases that we add to the data. It isn't real. It's a story. When we can reframe behavior in a way that's productive is when we can say, "My dog just barked at another dog." Okay, I got to go home and I'm going to start working on my dog switching sides. I'm going to plan three outings where I can take my dog at a distance to see dogs walking by and I can play games and reinforce them for good choices.



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I got the data. I'm taking action because I know this dog is capable of being an amazing family pet, and I know it's my role to help bring out the best in him. So, I take the data, I come up with a plan. I come up with the how my behavior influenced the dog. "Oh, yeah while I was walking my dog, I was scrolling on the phone and I didn't notice that he was worried about that dog coming by, and I didn't notice that the dog was staring him in the eye as he walked up and my dog did the bark to try to be big and get the dog to leave because I wasn't paying attention."

Behavior is data and we take that data and we make informed decisions. We reflect on our role. We reflect on what role we will have moving forward in the future. And that's how we can empower ourselves to always have the best outcome no matter what the data is that we are collecting.

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When we reframe behavior or data as clarity, it allows our nervous system to soften. It allows us to be in a thoughtful brain so we can confidently move forward and be motivated by the future, not afraid of it. And that alone leaves opportunity for our training to improve.

So, when you're training and training feels like it's going south, for whatever reason, ask your dog to hop it up in a [Hot Zone](#). Take a break and then give yourself a moment to name the emotion in order to tame it.

What are you feeling? Not the emotion isn't who you are, it's a feeling. Feelings can pass. So, name it. Give yourself a minute and then look to the right, take a deep breath and then reframe based on the data you've collected.

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If it wasn't that the dog purposely jumped up and nipped your arm when you were trying to run, what else could have it been? Well, it could have been that your dog didn't know how to express their emotions. So, what is the reframe? Well, that's great. It shows that my dog loves training. It shows that my dog's excited by the work that he's doing with me. I love everything about that.

I think I'm going to go back and I'm going to repeat what I just did, inspired by the fact that my training is working so well that the dog is so excited that he's nipping. I'm going to go back, I'm going to take a couple steps back.

I'm going to review and give him reinforcement for the stages before this where he wasn't biting me and then instead of running, I'm going to try and do the same thing by walking fast and give him tons of reinforcement if he doesn't nip me.

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Now, isn't that inspiring? Isn't that empowering? I get it. Sometimes the emotions are just overwhelming and it's okay to take a longer pause, walk around, do some jumping decks, do something that invigorates you.

So that you can look back at your dog, put your hands on your heart, feel some gratitude for what you've been presented and how great it is to have that dog in your life and then move forward with the next part of your strategy.

And here's the truth. Emotional resilience is a trainable skill. Just like any dog training skill. It improves with repetition, it becomes stronger with awareness, and it becomes automatic when you practice it enough.



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So, the next time your dog ignores a cue, or something goes wrong in your training, I would invite you to try the three little tips that work for me. I'd invite you to explore more possibilities of ways of regulating your own nervous system so that you can be the best for your dog in order to bring out the best in your dog.

So go ahead and try it. Try it tonight. Try it the next time you train your dog or try it the next time you're feeling an emotion coming up inside you. Name it to tame it, look right, deep breath, reframe what just happened. Take a look at the data with a different set of lense. Give yourself possibilities from that data and then come on back here and leave me a comment and let me know how it worked.

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I think this needs to be talked about a lot more in dog training. I think a lot of dog training sessions are ruined because people get overwhelmed with their emotions or get angry with their dog or get frustrated with their lack of success, and they take these big pouty steps around the room and pick up all their dog training stuff and go home.

And I think it doesn't have to be that way because dog training is meant to be connecting with your dog. And the dogs are there waiting to connect with us, but they absolutely know our emotions likely long before we get to the "name it" stage.

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So, try it and try to notice how your nervous system shifts. I'd love to hear a comment from you, but remember, in order for us to bring out the best in our dogs, we have to give them our best. But we're only human, so please give yourself grace. If this doesn't work the first time doesn't mean you shouldn't try it again.

Give yourself that space to work on your own emotional readiness. It will come. It's in there in all of us. Until next time, stay curious, stay humble, and keep making life great at both ends of the leash. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

### Resources:

[Podcast Episode 245: Make Dog Training Easy! Quick Guide To Antecedent Arrangements](#)

[Podcast Episode 230: Finding Joy Amidst Frustration And Shame In Dog Training – DeCaff's Story Part 2](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 266: Hot Zone And Stays – How One Dog Training Nuance Can Fix Anxiety And Duration](#)



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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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