

Not Seeing Results In Dog Training? Why Layers Of Learning Lead To Real World Success

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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Imagine you invested time in a dog training program and maybe even a year, maybe more, and you didn't get the results you expected. I'm sure you would be disappointed. Well, today I'm going to share with you why that may happen and how we can make sure it doesn't happen to you.

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Hi, I am Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today I want to talk about how to build the layers of dog training to bring you real world success. And there's several things that prompted this. I've been watching agility training seminars over the last three days.

And coincidentally, I saw a note in our online Recallers community of somebody who said "I feel like I can play all 40 of the Recallers games really, really, really well. And my dog has an amazing recall everywhere except at dog agility. And the dog doesn't listen to me and will run off..."

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And I can't remember the exact wording, but my first thought was, is it even possible that you can be brilliant at all of our Recaller games and not have success? Because my brain said, "No, no, it's not possible. She must have done something wrong." And then I said, let's ask a better question.

How would it be possible for somebody to have played all the games, have great success with the games, but still doesn't have success in a sport like dog agility? And then the flood of answers came to me. So, what we need to identify first is what is real world success to you?

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Now, when we start out with our first dog, we may not know. My very first dog, real world success I would've said: "An amazing family pet that will come when she's called, that I can hike off leash and will hang out at the barn while I'm riding and won't go off investigating." And pretty much that's what I got. I mean, I could leave her in my tack box. She would be there for hours curled up while I either groomed or trained my horse.

And that made me think about, I wonder if other people are playing the long game when they're training their dog. Are they just working through, in the case of our online students, the games in their living room, having success, checking them off, and then wondering why they're not seeing the real world success in their life.

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Now, some of you listening, you might just want this amazing family pet, but guess what happened with me and my first dog? It evolved because I started playing dog sports. I started doing Go to Ground, Terrier Trials. I think now a lot of people, the replacement for that is Barn Hunt. I'm not sure if they still do Go to Ground trials for Terriers, but I think they're very, very similar things.

Some of you, it might evolve to play dog agility, or you might have a dog that does the Bitey sports, or a dog that might use their nose or their eyes for hunting events. Lure coursing where a dog chases a lure around a course. Flyball, something that my dog This!y absolutely loves.



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So, your real-world success, your vision of that may evolve. But here's the thing that I noticed when my vision of real-world success evolved for my dog is this. When the [layers of learning](#) are in place, that carries over to anything that I want to do with that dog. So, what are those [layers of learning](#)?

Well, we've talked about them so many times here on the podcast, but just as a reminder, I'm going to start with 5Cs. So, no matter what it is you want to train your dog to do, no matter what sport you're working in, no matter what behavior or trick you are trying to teach your dog, the 5Cs are all important. And so, it starts with Connection.

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All dog training should start with Connection. That means you have a dog who's engaged with you. They know you are going into the training den if it's a new puppy, and that's where engagement and focus begins. How do they know that? Because you've consistently played games that create that focus.

You don't have to walk around telling the dog, "Watch me! Eyes up!" They know when they go into this environment, good things are happening. Now, if you're saying, "Yeah, but that happens in my environment, but it doesn't happen out on the street." We'll get to that.

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Connection, the first layer. Then we work on Clarity. The Clarity of the skill you want to teach. It could be a trick. It could be a skill for a sport. It could be something like loose leash walking for that amazing family pet. We then work on, we've got that dog understanding. We've got some Clarity. We've got to work on the dog's Confidence.

You can do this for either a longer duration of period, or you can do this with milder distractions. You can do this if I change your environment and I take you out of my training den and we go to the living room. You can do this, pumping up that dog's Confidence so that you have amazing behavior.

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The dog is having fun. They love the game. They're showing you how amazing they are. They've got Connection with you. That's how it starts. That grows into Clarity of what you want, and them demonstrating it in different environments means they have Confidence in the skill. Now we're going to go to the fourth C and that is Challenge that dog.

We're going to say, "How well do you know this?" I'm going to go to a brand new, I'm going outside the house, I'm going to add new distractions. We are really going to pump up the Challenge that dogs are going to be like, "Yeah, I got it!" "You taught me how to retrieve like a flying disc or a ball or whatever it is that you have thrown, and I got it."

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"It doesn't matter where we do it. I've got it. I'm engaged. I love the game. I know it involves you. I know it goes through. You we're on it." Now you can go to the top of that 5C pyramid and add Complexity. What does Complexity look like?

Well, maybe you're hiding something, and the dog has to go find it. If we're working on finding a retrieve, maybe you are putting other obstacles out there to confuse the dog, and you might throw something that you want them to retrieve in a pile of other things that they're not sure what they are or they might be really attracted to them. Complexity can take all different looks.



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Sights, sounds, and smells. It's taking your distractions and amping them all the way up. Alright, 5Cs, you've heard me talk about this so many times, but those 5Cs are so important because let's talk about the number one thing we really want from a dog and that is focus. When a dog is focused on you, we would call that a connected dog, right?

Now, they don't have to be like riveted, their eye staring that you might be walking down the street, they might be looking about, but if there's a distraction, they look at you. They're like, they're connected. So, a dog that is looking to their owner, connected dog. Now, the dog that you now say, we're going to do agility, or we're going to do Flyball, we're going to do obedience.

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And the dog immediately recognizes the [antecedents](#) that create their knowledge they're doing something different, the connection now will go to the sport. Will go to what it is you want them to be focused on. It doesn't mean they are 100% disconnected from you because if you just said their name or tap their head or ask for a [Hand Target](#), "Yes, I recognize the sport starts with the connection to you and now we start to work."

So, we've got the dog who's focused for their owner. That's the connected dog. Focus for work. That's the driven dog. What if the dog is now focused for distractions? What do we call that dog? Some people might call them jerks.

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Some people might call them playing on their own agenda. Some people might call them over the top. What if we called them things like detached? Why is that dog detached? They're detached from their work. They're detached from you. What if we called them environmentally challenged, over aroused, overexcited, overstimulated, overwhelmed by the environment they find themselves in.

Remember, our dogs are doing the best they can with the education they've been given in the environment they've been put in. How do we get here? How do we get to a place where I had a connected dog and now, I've gone to that dog has more focus for the distractions than they do for me.

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They are environmentally overwhelmed. A dog can't be driven for work if they are detached from their owners. I'm going to say that again because some people have agility dogs that they're so excited that they bust out of their collar and they don't even wait at the start line. They're so excited they go, that is not a dog focused for work.

That is a dog that is detached from their owners. And let me tell you, how does it happen? It happened because somewhere along the way you were willing to give up part of the 5Cs. You know, there's a fellow that I used to read everything he wrote when I was a young adult, a man by the name of Zig Ziglar, and he had this great quote, and that is 'The biggest reason for people's lack of success in life is their willingness to give up what they want, most of all for what they want right now.'

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So, if your dog has become detached, if you had a connected dog and you maybe had a dog who was driven for work and they've turned into a detached dog, a dog who is, maybe they're doing the work, maybe they're chasing the birds in the field, but they're chasing them on their own. They are no longer checking in. They no longer are following your guidelines.



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Or maybe you would just have a dog that they go out to do agility and they say, "I see a pond. I'm gone." Environmentally overwhelmed or detached. You need to think of that dog with adjectives that take away blame or judgment from who that dog is, because who they are is what we created them to be. Our dogs are a reflection of our ability to train.

So how did we get to that place? Because there's a question you need to ask yourself, and this is a question I ask myself when I went to my second Go to Ground trial with my Jack Russell. When she realized where we were and she started to do this guttural Terrier scream. And she started pulling on the leash because she wanted to go to the hunt area.

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And the little voice in my head said to me, "Will this behavior I'm allowing take me closer or further away from my real-life success?" Remember, my real-life success was I wanted an amazing family pet, one I could go hiking with, but the dog that I saw at my second Go to Ground event was a dog who now said, "I love it. I want some more of it."

A dog who said, "My focus for you has now gone to be focused for what I want." And if I said, "Oh, I love that my dog loves this stuff now." and I just let her pull me in, there would've been established a time when what you want has nothing to do with me. And that is a slippery slope to not having success in the real world.

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So, what did I do? I took her back towards the car and I asked her to play some games with me. Eventually I got to a place where all of my Terriers and I did trial. I actually was the US National Go to Ground Champion with one of my Terriers. They had to walk in heel position. Now I probably could have even said, "You have to be quiet. You couldn't make those Terrier screams."

I wasn't willing to go that far. I said you had to walk in heel position. You had to sit, I had to unclip your leash, and you had to hold that position. Then you were allowed to do what you wanted to do. Then I had a dog that was no longer detached.

I then had part of the process what you love most of all, going down that hole to find the rats. You get through me. I'm part of this. I'm not a boat anchor that's holding you back from getting there as fast as you'd like to get there.

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And so, if your dog is not listening in agility, they are not holding their position at the start line, they won't come back to you. That didn't happen overnight. That happened in small little releases on your part, small releases of the connection that you allowed to go because you fell in love with seeing your dog do the thing.

I don't care if the thing is biting a sleeve. I don't care if the thing is hunting ducks. I don't care if the thing is herding sheep. I don't care if the thing is jumping over sticks and going through tunnels. You relinquished you as part of the process of doing the thing.

Now you are more of an anchor to a wall at the thing. You are more what unclips the leash to allow the dog to do the thing. You are not part of the thing. The value the dog has for the thing is no longer going through you. So, when I play agility and my dogs finish the last jump, they don't run off and try to herd the other dog.



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They don't circle the ring, but nor do they try to get out of their collar so fast so that they can take the first jump. Why? Because the 5Cs dictated that everything starts with Connection and that the Clarity of what I expect at the start line. It starts with the dog sitting up straight. Somewhere in the first, I don't know, few repetitions of them doing a sequence with a Border Collie that wants to be slinking and pulsing so that they can leave.

That's not the Clarity that I had in mind. So that little voice in my head comes back. "Is the behavior I'm seeing going to hurt or contribute to my vision of what real life success looks like for us?" And it will happen so small the first time. It might be you ask your dog to sit and instead of their feet together, their feet split apart.

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It might be that the dog stands up and instead of coming back and playing a few games to restart them, you just stood back at the first jump and say, "Hey, hey, hey, sit." Why did you do that? Because the enjoyment or the reinforcement you get for watching the dog do the things was more important than seeing the dog do the start line correctly.

You were willing to give up what you want, most of all, and that is Connection to the dog while you did the thing. You were willing to give that up for what you wanted right now, which was seeing your dog do a sequence or watching your dog chase a lure or watching your dog focusing on a bird or a sleeve.

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It doesn't happen overnight, but when it starts happening, the dogs who are brilliant at patterns of reinforcement, those dogs start changing another boundary, and another boundary, and another boundary. So how do you get it back? In our Connected Dog series that we ran last week, there were so many people that asked this question, "What game do I have to play to get my dog to stop ____?"

Boom, there were so many fill in the blanks. "What game do I have to play to get my dog to stop reacting at other dogs on leash?" "What game do I have to play to get my dog to stop jumping on my mother-in-law when she comes through the door?" No single game is a panacea to anything.

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It's layers of learning every game, starting with probably [Crate Games](#) and [ItsYerChoice](#). Every game has the 5Cs baked into the recipe and you keep and rework those 5Cs. So, no matter what it is, you are part of the thing. Because what we're ultimately doing is building an amazing relationship with our dogs because we want them to work with us.

We want to be connected. We want them to be focused and driven for work, but not at the expense of the detachment from us. Relationships take time. They start with one layer. Then that one layer is in our world, is it the first game? ItsYerChoice, Crate Games, and then it goes to the next layer. In our world, probably [Collar Grab](#), it goes to the next layer. We keep building until 'I'm competing at the world championships with my dogs because of all those intentional layers that were built in.'

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I know it sounds easy from where I'm sitting. But it sounds easy because I've made sure I continue to ask that question 'Will this behavior hurt or contribute to my idea of what real life success looks like?' It works for dogs. Heck, it might even work for a spouse. I don't know. Those of you whose partner have a thing they love, like fishing or golf. See if you can't be part of that process.



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Instead of maybe getting on their back when they come back, back from golf, like, "Why haven't you done this? And I'm waiting for you to do that." Be part of the reinforcement that they find in the sport. I don't know, just spit balling ideas with you.

Whether it's working with a partner, whether it's working with a child or an adolescent, or you're working with your dog, it's all just behavior. And the 5Cs will have an amazing impact on any behavior if you're intentionally applying them. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Crate Games:

[Get Crate Games Online](#)

Learn To Play ItsYerChoice

[Learn how to play the ItsYerChoice \(IYC\) Game](#)

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 171: Dog Training With Layered Shaping: Why Classical Conditioning Must Come First](#)

[Podcast Episode 21: The 5 Critical Dog Training Layers for Confidence with Anything](#)

[Podcast Episode 202: Getting A Happy Well Behaved Dog With The ABCs Of Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 18: 4 Puppy and Dog Training Games for Acquired Bite Inhibition](#)

[Podcast Episode 68: 3 Easy Tricks Every Dog Should Know](#)



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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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