



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about what to do if you find yourself not sure you want to be a lawyer. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be.

We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or a rating on your favorite listening app, and if you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about what to do if you're graduating or you have graduated already from law school, and you find yourself either without a job, not wanting to practice law, or not really sure how to figure out what to do next. So, I guess one of the first questions people often have in this scenario, particularly if they're graduating soon or they've just graduated, is whether they need to sit for the bar.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, we get this a lot.

Alison Monahan: We get a lot of questions around this.

Lee Burgess: And I get it, because who wants to take the bar exam?

Alison Monahan: Exactly. You're like, "I definitely don't want to be a lawyer. I don't want to take the bar." Unfortunately we're here to tell you, you probably should sit for the bar.

Lee Burgess: I know, you probably should. Because you're going to be the most prepared to take the bar exam right after graduating from law school. It's just-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, if you ever think there's like a 1% possibility...

Lee Burgess: And one iota, yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... that you're going to ever do this, the best time to do it is right after you graduate.

Lee Burgess: Yep. So you have choices, the thing is, about the bar exam. And so if you're really not sure where you want to practice or if you want to practice, I think now, with the UBE especially, you have some thoughtful options about what you want to do.



- Alison Monahan: For sure.
- Lee Burgess: If I didn't know where I was going to be or what I wanted to do, I would probably sit for the UBE, because it's going to be the most easily transferable exam in the country, and continue to be as other jurisdictions continue to adopt it. And then, no matter where you end up, you have a law license that may get you admission into a given state, unless you're in California.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I mean, there's certain states that probably would be holdouts for a while – California, Florida. But even some of the ones we thought would be holdouts, like Texas and Illinois, are actually coming on board with the UBE. So I think it's really just inevitable, almost, that the UBE is going to take over. I don't know exactly what that time frame will be, but at some point you probably will be able to be admitted anywhere with a UBE score that's high enough.
- Lee Burgess: And it just gives you a lot of options.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So it's just one of those things that, yeah, it's a pain to sit for the bar and to make yourself study. And the one thing I think people sometimes do is they're like, "Okay, fine, I'll study, but I don't really want to pass."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a waste of time and money.
- Alison Monahan: That's stupid.
- Lee Burgess: Please don't do that. If you're going to spend time and money... Sitting for the bar is incredibly expensive. Just sitting for it, not even paying for a prep course. I think it's over, typically, \$1,000 just for the privilege of sitting for the test, let alone a hotel room, and-
- Alison Monahan: Right, then you have to pay to be admitted, and all these other things. So it's a big undertaking. I get the people who are not sure if they want to practice don't really want to deal with it. But I do think it probably behooves you to just do it. There are a lot of jobs where you may not require a local license, but you need to have a bar card some place. And often these are nonlegal positions, or kind of legal adjacent positions. A lot of them are in the government, things like that, that you might actually end up being interested in.
- Lee Burgess: Or in-house jobs. I know sometimes in-house jobs you don't need to be licensed in the jurisdiction in which your company's working.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Which that also gets complicated, but there are typically ways that you can get around that if you file the right paperwork. And so I think if you think there's any possibility that you might want some type of legal related job in the future, I think it's best just to be admitted some place. And you can sit in the



UBE state with the lowest pass score if you want. I mean, that's totally fine. I mean, if you pass there, you can waive in other places.

Lee Burgess: I also think, and I don't know, do you agree with this – that if someone just sees a JD after your name, and that you're not licensed...

Alison Monahan: That looks bad.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that raises more questions than you want.

Alison Monahan: They just assume you failed the bar. And then you can go in and try to explain that actually you never took the bar, but then they would be asking you a lot of questions about, "Why didn't you take it, and are you even telling me the truth?" Either you're lying about failing, or you just didn't take it, which is very unusual and kind of looks weird. Yeah, I mean I think if you can just kind of knock this out, just suck it up for another couple of months. Focus, get licensed some place, and then you can immediately go inactive. You don't even have to pay your full bar fees. I mean, I retired officially in one of the states I was licensed in. And if I want to un-retire, basically all I have to do is go pay them all the back bar fees.

For me, I always thought of it kind of like the idea that Reid Hoffman talks about in his book, [The Start-up of You](#), where he says you may not know what you want to do, but you're going to have a lot more flexibility if you have not only your plan A and your plan B, but also your plan Z. And your plan Z is basically how you support yourself when everything falls apart. So for me, one of the things about being a lawyer is, if everything falls apart, I can always go back and start up a law practice. I mean, that's feasible.

Lee Burgess: Or be a contract lawyer, or...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, get a job. So, having that in your back pocket can actually open up a bigger universe, because you know that if really things go badly in this new plan for your life, and you have to go back and figure out a way to make money or support your kids or whatever – if you have a law license you're going to have that option, and if you don't, you're not.

Lee Burgess: Also the world is changing so fast, and different opportunities in the legal profession are coming up all the time in areas of the law that might interest you that maybe never interested you before. So I have some friends that are working in the cannabis law space.

Alison Monahan: Right, that was where I was going to go with that. I know a lot of people who are interested in that.



Lee Burgess: But, I will say that it's a fascinating kind of wild, wild west area of the law. There's a lot of things that are developing really quickly. They're dealing with a lot of complicated regulation. It's an industry that a lot of people are very passionate about, and I think there are some people who are like, "Wow, I would like to work in that," because you're actually helping shape the future of this.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or just like, "I want to hang out with the people who are basically cannabis owners, club owners. Those are my people, so I want to be their lawyer."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Which is totally fine.

Alison Monahan: Totally fine.

Lee Burgess: But if you've never sat for the bar, even if you had been inactive, you have really limited your options, and you can't offer to be someone's lawyer. You can't give legal advice, you can't do anything like that. So, you just want to go ahead and just put that in your back pocket. Once you are a lawyer, nobody can take that away from you unless you get disbarred.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly.

Lee Burgess: So don't commit a felony, and you're good to go.

Alison Monahan: Looks like some felonies you might've committed this week is if your kids were trying to get into college.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So don't do that either. Don't bribe USC to get your kids into college.

Alison Monahan: Anyway. Off-topic.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, anyway. Nothing against USC, but yeah, I was like, "USC, really?"

Alison Monahan: Well, there are a lot of good schools caught up in that. But that's a separate conversation.

Lee Burgess: That's a totally different, separate conversation. Okay. So now that we've convinced you to hopefully take the bar...

Alison Monahan: And to commit to actually doing your best to pass.

Lee Burgess: And commit to doing it. And remember, I guess, a side note is, if the money that it takes to study is what's keeping you from taking it – so the cost of bar preparation courses – you should check out our Bar Exam Toolbox website, because we talk about a lot of alternative ways to study for the bar that are



much more cost efficient. And it may be that you can set yourself up for success, not spending \$5,000-\$6,000 on bar prep, which makes this a little easier of a pill to swallow.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, it's not going to be pleasant if you're pretty sure you don't want to practice, but you may as well just do it.

Lee Burgess: Yup. Alright, so now that we've convinced you to take the bar, you need to also be open to the idea that you might need some time to figure stuff out.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I think for sure.

Lee Burgess: You know, that you're probably not going to wake up one morning and know exactly what you want to do, but unfortunately you probably have bills. So you want to think about finding a side hustle to pay those bills once you graduate. So, the first side hustle that a lot of people look into is doing contract legal work, which is often doc review.

Alison Monahan: Right, which is, again, not fun. But it can pay the bills.

Lee Burgess: It can. You can do it typically from your laptop at home, depending on the job. But I've also had other friends who've had lots of varieties of contract legal work, doing research, or helping on a single case or something like that. So I mean, it's definitely an option. You typically need a law license, or a law license in process to get some of that work. But you can make decent money.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, it's not the worst thing ever.

Lee Burgess: Especially if it's temporary.

Alison Monahan: If it's temporary. I mean, you may not enjoy it, but it's kind of a first world problem. If someone's paying you to sit inside and do something that's kind of boring, there are worse things.

Lee Burgess: That's true. You also can look, if you have other skills, to create your side hustle. My side hustle in law school was tutoring for the SAT, which was actually a decent way to make money. But we also know law graduates who have looked at other kind of ad hoc jobs, like Uber, or Instacart shopping, or other things that they can just kind of pick up here and there to supplement their income while they're trying to build what they're working on.

Alison Monahan: Right. The reality is, if you don't have a job to go to, you probably have a lot of free time. So your free time can be put to work doing other people's chores.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I made a huge mistake when I was young, I think, of being too focused on this idea that everything I did had to be part of my greater path, and that if I took time to do something else that wasn't what looked like was my linear career path, that that was going to be kind of a black mark on my resume or something like that. And I think that that's a little bit silly. I think that most people can accept that you are oftentimes taking care of practical considerations while you may be looking for your next step. If anything, I think now it's kind of expected that you might need time to figure things out, because you can't really change your career path particularly fast these days.
- Alison Monahan: Right, I think that's right. I think it's a balance. My co-clerk before we were getting ready to leave our clerk jobs and take theoretically real jobs says to him, "Oh, well what'd you think, as a hiring partner, if you saw that I had left my clerkship, and then gone on and been like a ski school instructor for a few months?" And he was like, "Well, I would definitely want to schedule extra time to talk to you." He's like, "I'm not saying it would be something I wouldn't hire you over, but I would really want to have a conversation about where your head was."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. But I could also see a conversation, let's say you started your clerkship right after law school, maybe while you were even studying for the bar. You didn't take any time off after school, and you just needed a break.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, honestly...
- Lee Burgess: I think you could explain it.
- Alison Monahan: No, you can definitely explain it. You just have to be ready to explain it. And you don't know what people are going to respond to. For example, the key reason that I actually got an interview and got that particular clerkship was that the judge was into architecture, and I had a master's in architecture. And he wanted to have somebody he could talk about architecture with in our free time. So, someone looking at my resume with would think, "Wow, that is so weird that you have this master's in architecture. That is going to be such a downside." And actually it's what got me the job.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, you never know. I also was at a talk once with a bunch of legal recruiters who said they love seeing retail or food related jobs, like wait staff jobs and things like that, because they show that you have customer service experience, and you've dealt with people yelling at you.
- Alison Monahan: No, and I think that's so key in a client-centered legal environment. Same thing when I was a programmer – the CEO basically would only hire people who have been in some sort of food service. So I had been a barista in college, so that was



sufficient for him. He's like, "Well, I prefer that you be a waiter. But barista's good enough."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So the reality is, I think you can weave a story out of lots of these jobs if you need to explain them to a recruiter later, or a hiring person later.

Alison Monahan: And the other thing you can always be doing at the same time is some sort of pro bono projects, or volunteer work, so when it comes time to put this on your resume, it's six months volunteering with Sanctuary for Families in New York City. I mean, they can talk to you about how much you did in an average week. You can make it fairly substantial enough that you're like, "Well, I was looking for work and trying to figure this out." I mean, it doesn't even have to be legal related. You could be doing whatever kind of work you want to do, volunteer stuff. I do think you just need to think about how you're going to sell it later, but not get too obsessed about it.

Lee Burgess: And if you're not sure what some of those legally related volunteer opportunities could be, I think bar associations are great places to look. They oftentimes will have trainings on certain types. I know in San Francisco landlord-tenant's a big one, or integration...

Alison Monahan: Workforce, asylum.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so they do these trainings and then they will often connect you with the nonprofits that do this sort of work. So if you want some legally related volunteer work to pad your resume while you're working on something else, I think the bar association's a good first stop to get training. Because if you're a recent graduate, it's also possible you have no idea what you're doing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and also, you may find some of this interesting. If you pick something that you're like, "Oh, well, I'm curious about how you do a divorce case. That seems practical in real life." I mean, you never know. You might find out you really like it. Or you might have some piece of that process that you find interesting that you wouldn't have expected, and that might open up some sort of career path that you haven't really thought about. So I think following your interests. If there's anything you're remotely interested in in the legal field, you may as well kind of explore that, and just see, "Okay, could I see myself doing this or not?" And the answer may be "No". I mean, I thought I was going to start a family practice when I left my big law patent litigation job, and I, thank goodness, took a pro bono case that then dragged on for three years, and it made me realize this was probably not the right field for me.

Lee Burgess: And then the Internet brought us together, and the rest is history.

Alison Monahan: Then we met on Twitter. Exactly.



Lee Burgess: Something else that I think people don't know a lot about is whether or not they can push off their loans, especially right after graduation to...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, big one.

Lee Burgess: Lighten their financial responsibilities, because that can make it easier while you figure things out. So you should learn about those tools and opportunities, depending on the...

Alison Monahan: We have a couple of recent [podcasts](#) on this from different perspectives, but it's definitely something that you want to educate yourself on, and you cannot just trust your loan servicer to give you the best advice, because the reality is, they are probably not going to.

Lee Burgess: Right. Well, they have different interests than you do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, you need to understand, "Okay, these are my options. These are the implications 20 or 30 years down the road if I take option A versus option B." Again, you have time to do some research.

Lee Burgess: Yup. Alright, so after you've kind of set yourself up and you figured out your side hustle, and you've got enough money coming in, so you're paying some sort of rent...

Alison Monahan: Or you're living with your parents.

Lee Burgess: Right, or your car is not going to get impounded. Then the next step is, you've got to start talking to people. And so if you're noodling on an idea of the type of work that you want to do, you really want to embrace the informational interview. And I know, Alison, you're a big fan of the informational interview.

Alison Monahan: I am. And there's a whole [series](#) on The Girl's Guide to Law School site that we can link to about the process of setting up an informational interview, who you should reach out to, what you want to talk about, how you follow up. So if this is something new to you, I'd recommend that you go read those posts. They're short, people say they're helpful. But yeah, the informational interview is really a chance, and never say this in your opening email asking for one, but basically it's a chance to pick someone's brain. However, people hate that phrasing, so never say it. So, you've got to be careful about who you're kind of approaching, and how you're approaching them. But I think most people are pretty happy to talk about themselves for half an hour over coffee.

If you seem like an eager beaver, like a nice person who's done some research, it can be a really great way to make connections. One of the questions you can always ask at the end is, "Who do you think I should follow up with?" And that



kind of opens up your next set of interviews. And you just never know who you're going to meet. I know so many people have ended up in a job that they just never would have considered via just talking to a bunch of people, and then opportunities arose. And then eventually they were like, "Wow, I never thought I'd like this job, but I do."

Lee Burgess: And I think we talked about this when we were [discussing the Michelle Obama book](#). She kind of went through this process when she was going through her own...

Alison Monahan: Her own masterful informational interview.

Lee Burgess: ...Career crisis of what she wanted to do after she left big law. And she just met and talked to everybody she could.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and got those people on her team.

Lee Burgess: And I think that that is critically important. And if you don't know people in the space that you're trying to get into, then you need to network, network, network, and try and get people to introduce you. I think it's really powerful to remember that you can ask people for help directly. If you want to know someone who practices a certain type of law, then let's go back to the cannabis example. If you are listening to this and you're like, "Yes"...

Alison Monahan: "That might be for me."

Lee Burgess: ..."That's for me." Then the next step would be to send Alison and I an email and say, "I listened to this podcast, and I was really taken with this idea that there's so much going on in cannabis law. Do you know you anyone you could introduce me to that might be willing to talk to me about their cannabis law practice?" To which I would probably be like, "Sure."

Alison Monahan: "Yeah, probably. Let me think about it."

Lee Burgess: "Let me think about it, or let me email a few friends and see if they'd be willing to talk to you, and then I can do an introduction." And it makes me feel good because I've been able to help you. But I wouldn't even know that that's what you needed unless you were very direct. If you sent me an email that said, "Hey, I listened to your podcast on cannabis law. Cool. Thanks." I'm probably not going to respond.

Alison Monahan: "Okay, great. Thanks for listening."

Lee Burgess: Right. I'm not going to respond with, "Here are the names of my friends who practice cannabis law, you should talk to them."



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think networking outside of the legal space can seem more difficult. But again, there you're actually a little bit interesting because you are a lawyer, and most people think lawyers are impressive.
- Lee Burgess: It's true.
- Alison Monahan: So, if you think you want to get into the business side of things, or even something like positive psychology, meditation, whatever – I think you can work your legal connection a little bit more, along with why you're interested in this other thing. But it can open up some doors that you may, being in the middle of it, not think it's that impressive.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And one of the things I think we have learned through owning this business, and even doing the podcast is sometimes it can be very easy to say, "So-and-so is never going to want to talk to me ever, except this interview or whatever." And if you reach out to them, sometimes they say "Yes". They have no idea.
- Alison Monahan: Unless you ask, they're definitely not going to say "Yes".
- Lee Burgess: They're definitely not going to say "Yes". So you have to make yourself a little uncomfortable, and put yourself out there.
- Alison Monahan: That being said, do not just send like 8 million random emails, and then have follow-up emails being like, "Did you read my other email? Did you read my other email?" That is annoying.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, that's so annoying. Please don't do that. Please don't do that. And don't send form emails that you can tell are form emails, and then have mistaken content in them, like talking about something wrong about our business.
- Alison Monahan: No, it's just one of those things where people can tell whether you actually genuinely have an interest in speaking with them in particular. And if the answer to that's "No", then it just feels kind of transactional, and you're like, "Well, I don't know who this person is. Why would I help them?" But most people, if you approach them saying, "Hey, I'd really enjoy speaking with you about this particular topic, I know that you're an expert in it. I understand you're super busy, is there any way we could have like a 15 minute call?" You can't ask for dinner.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. Yeah, so I think that that is really helpful. And I think we have talked about this in other blog posts too, but in the idea of networking, when you are sending these communications out to people to try and make this contact, anything you can do to make it easier for them. So we have talked about the



power of a tool called [Calendly](#), which we believe is magic. If anybody's ever met with us, you have received our Calendly link.

Alison Monahan: Why? Because we don't want to spend time scheduling a meeting with you.

Lee Burgess: Right, scheduling meetings is some of the most painful waste of time out there, like multiple email exchanges. And so, one of the things that you can do if you are suggesting times that would be good for networking, is if you have a Calendly link, and you can say, "Are any of these times that you're available for a 15-minute call?", or something like that. And it might seem weird sometimes sending someone who is "more powerful" your calendar, but I think a busy person would open that calendar and look at their calendar, and select something. It populates their calendar, and it actually makes their life easier.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. And then you just need to be absolutely certain that you show up to whatever you've agreed to, because I know you've had that experience of people standing you up, Lee. And it's just not a good impression.

Lee Burgess: No, I get really mad. I don't have a lot of extra time. So I get really frustrated, and then I typically don't help them anymore.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Because I get really angry.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you need to make a good impression here. There's actually an interesting [series](#) also on the Girl's Guide of a friend of mine who was a litigator, and wanted to move out of litigation and out of a firm, and how she kind of made that transition happen. And I think in her case she ended up getting the job via her uncle sitting next to someone at a dinner and chatting with them. So you've also got to tell your friends and family that you're looking, what you're looking for, so they have kind of your elevator pitch. So if they do sit beside someone at a dinner that seems interesting, they can say, "Hey. Oh, would you mind meeting my niece? Like I know she's really interested in this area. She went to Yale law school." And they're like, "Oh, yes."

Lee Burgess: Right. And we just went to a conference, the [Wisdom Conference](#), that was very interesting. We met some other interesting people who have baseline similar interests. And I think that's another thing you can do. We used to host a conference that we found was a pretty interesting way for people to get together. There's self-selection, typically.

Alison Monahan: If you look at our conferences, years down the road, there are people I've become close friends with, we've in some cases even hired people that were at our conference.



- Lee Burgess: Yep, collaborated with them.
- Alison Monahan: Who would have thought?
- Lee Burgess: Who would have thought? So that's another way that you can in-person engage with people, and meet people that might be outside of your typical network.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And even things like meetup, if you don't want to commit to a full conference. Wherever you're living there probably are meetup groups for people with similar interests, and you can just go to those. It's free.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So I think sometimes people find working with a coach valuable to help you figure out what you want to do next. I know that I've worked with a coach before, and I definitely learned some stuff.
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think it's just helpful to have somebody kind of outside of that space to bounce ideas off of them. You could even try going back to your law school career services office, although they're not so great if you go in and tell them, "Hey, I'm pretty sure I don't want to be a lawyer. Do you have anything for me?" There are a few places that are probably going to send you, their website, things like that, that they may send you, but they're probably not going to be as helpful as someone who's a career coach that isn't so focused on the legal profession, and has different ideas and understands that plenty of other jobs exist.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And one thing that actually my coach recommended I do back in the early... I think it was the year that we started the business together, is I went on a two-day retreat by myself.
- Alison Monahan: Nice.
- Lee Burgess: I went to Half Moon Bay, and I stayed in this little hotel, and I was just supposed to meet with myself, since we had just started working together. My tutoring business was kind of separate. And I took long walks and I went hiking. Many of us like to be alone, but multiple days alone can be a lot. But when you really took the noise out of being with other people all the time, I came up with great ideas. It's where I came up with the idea that we should start the Bar Exam Toolbox and launch this separate... I remember sending you an email, being like, "On my walk, looking at the ocean. I don't know why we haven't thought of this before." But I think it was just that I hadn't given myself space to kind of think creatively and think outside the box. Now we go on these retreats together to do similar things together, to get out of our norm, kind of the machine that happens when you're just cranking through work all the time.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think if you're at this kind of inflection point in your life and your career, it is important to give yourself that kind of physical space and time if you



can, to really get outside of your day-to-day. Because there's always going to be something: "Did I do laundry? Did I do the dishes? Do I need to go grocery shopping?" And that kind of stuff can take up all of your mind until suddenly it's the end of the week and you haven't made any progress. So, I think another thing is you've got to hold yourself accountable on this. Whether that means getting organized, making some type of spreadsheet or [Trello](#) board for example, of who you're talking with.

Lee Burgess: I knew we were going to be able to work Trello into this conversation.

Alison Monahan: If you're planning anything, pretty much Trello's the way to do it. If you're planning your life and your career, and you're trying to find your direction, pretty sure you're going to need Trello for that, because you need to know who you've talked to. I'm talking to contractors right now, and even now I've got a Trello board. Because at a certain point you can't remember who's Buck and who's Dave, and how did you find these people, and who referred you, and who have you talked to. So just making all that in one place actually just makes your life so much easier.

Lee Burgess: It does. And if you are really organized and you're keeping track of who you've talked to and who you've met, and you've got pictures of business cards in your Trello board and notes about people after you've met them, it's going to make you seem very impressive when you come into contact with them again. I think I was a freshman in college, I had just finished my freshman year of college, I worked for this guy who is the largest exporter of bull semen in the world.

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Well, you did grow up in the Central Valley.

Lee Burgess: I did grow up in the... Yeah, it's possible back in the Central Valley. But one of my jobs that summer was actually taking these piles of business cards that he would collect at events, and he would scribble notes on them with specifics about every person that he met. So it was like, "Has a wife and two kids, wife's name is Barbara". And so they had, at that point I guess it was some sort of an Access database, probably, back in the day. But his whole thing was that he needed to be able to search for these people, so if he knew they were going to be at an event, he could recall these details that he had written down.

Alison Monahan: Right, so he's not saying "Tim Apple".

Lee Burgess: Right, for example.



- Alison Monahan: Theoretically.
- Lee Burgess: Theoretically. But I remember being, what, I was 19, going, "Wow, that's actually pretty brilliant when you think about it, because the next time he met somebody, he did remember those thoughtful details." And so technology makes it easier now for you to do that, because you can jot down things that you remember, but the next time you follow up with someone, and then you say, "I remember you were going on that trip to Asia. How was your trip to Asia? Did you like Japan? Would you recommend going back?" Whatever it might be.
- Alison Monahan: That makes you look pretty on it.
- Lee Burgess: It makes you look pretty on it. And so being organized may feel tedious, but it is going to make you more memorable.
- Alison Monahan: No, and I think people who do rise to the top of a lot of these professions are those types of people. I remember also having an early boss, and anytime we'd go into an event, she would have her two assistants beside her basically briefing her about who she was getting ready to talk to about, "This is Dave, his wife is Mandy, they have two kids, and she has a cupcake business."
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: It was like, "Oh, how's Mandy doing? Loved the cupcakes you sent." She has like no idea who this person is.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's very impressive. Okay, so going back to accountability. If you're someone who doesn't really stay on top of their own tasks very well, how do you prevent yourself from procrastinating? Do you think you have to bring someone in to create accountability for you?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think that's one option. One thing I think people can do is they make excuses for themselves and just say, "Oh, I'm not a very organized person." That's ridiculous. You can become more organized. You might be starting from a lower baseline. I wouldn't say I'm actually a particularly organized person, but my life is now very organized. Thank you, Trello. They should really be sponsoring this podcast.
- Lee Burgess: They should.
- Alison Monahan: But yeah, I think if you know that you're a person who struggles with this, I think getting some systems in place is a really good idea, but also maybe having like a friend, or a coach, or a trusted person that you're checking in with, and maybe is checking in with you. It could be a mastermind group where you're all trying to figure out your lives, and you check in with each other. You just want to be



careful to make sure these people are positive, not bringing you down. But whether it is even meeting in person once a week or something at a coffee shop to go through all of the stuff that you've done that week, or not done, and kind of make your plan. Or if it's completely virtual, I do think having something where someone else is actually asking you about it can really help.

- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I guess we should probably mention that we also have someone on our team who does this sort of work.
- Alison Monahan: Very good point. You can go to [CareerDicta.com](https://www.careerdicta.com), you can actually work with us, you can get all the accountability, plus your very own Trello board.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I know, it's magic. But find out how to, or figure out how you need to be successful. And if you have your own weaknesses, if you're a procrastinator, if you're not very good at setting your own deadlines, then you need to come up with a solution.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, none of us are great at everything.
- Lee Burgess: No. Alright, so I think the other thing to keep in mind as you are working on this is some of the easy pitfalls. So we just talked about procrastination and kind of being able to self-sabotage yourself. But I think anxiety over the future is something that can easily derail you.
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely.
- Lee Burgess: So I think you just need to be really aware of this, and maybe pull on some coping mechanisms.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you know what the best antidote to anxiety is – actually doing something. So stop procrastinating. You'll be a lot less anxious.
- Lee Burgess: It's true. It's true. I also think that for those perfectionists in the room, and on the podcast and listening to us, feeling of failure and this idea that you should have your life all figured out, that you should have this \$175,000 a year job, that you're a failure – this is all really destructive inner monologue stuff that is going to prevent you from being successful, and it's going to make you less impressive when people meet you in person. If you go to somebody and you're like apologetic because you don't have a big firm job, or you're figuring stuff out, or your super self-deprecating and you don't have any confidence, they're going to be like, "Wow."
- Alison Monahan: "Good luck with that."
- Lee Burgess: "Good luck. I'm not going to refer you out."



Alison Monahan: "I don't want to work with you."

Lee Burgess: "I don't want to work with you. You're not particularly impressive." And it may not be that that's even true, it's just how you're presenting yourself.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it's just one of those things where you've got to fake confidence in what you're doing, even if you don't feel it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think the other thing to watch out for is just doing things because it pleases other people. I think when you're feeling lost, there can be a lot of unsolicited advice about what you should be doing, especially from sometimes family members, or other people who are invested in your future. So it's like, "Well, you just should go get a legal job."

Alison Monahan: "Yeah, just go get a job."

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: "Why are you making this so hard for yourself? Just go find a job."

Lee Burgess: Right. And maybe that works for a little bit, but if you really want to do something different, or if you have this idea of a life you want to create for yourself with maybe different elements to it than the typical 9:00 to 5:00 office job, I think you want to be authentic and go for that. Figure it out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because ideally you want a career path in the end that's really authentic to you and your interest, your goals, your skills, what you want your life to look like. And having a law degree really qualifies you to do a lot of different things. And also, you're just generally a smart person, so you probably could do a lot of other things without the law degree.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's true. If you had told my law student self that this is what I would be doing on a day-to-day basis, I don't think I would have ever believed you.

Alison Monahan: No. I'd be like, "Running a business? What? That sounds horrible."

Lee Burgess: I know. But I have so much fun doing it. Actually it's great.

Alison Monahan: I think the other thing, and that's a good point too, is that you don't really know what something looks like from the outside. So, you kind of have to just try a bunch of things and actually pay attention to what excites you, what makes you happy, what makes you engaged. And that could be inside of the legal profession or it could be outside of the legal profession. Either one of those is totally fine.



Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, give yourself some time, give yourself a little space, and try and open your mind to different opportunities. Because I think the other challenge can be our parents, if those are the people who are giving you a lot of career advice. They were entering the workforce at a very different time, where there were very different types of opportunities.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean the idea that you're just going to sign up for a place and work for them your entire life is probably not really accurate. So you're going to have to make some moves. Life's too short to be miserable if you can avoid it. So, ideally you want to find something that's going to make you happy, sufficiently financially stable. And I think most people can find this path, but it's going to take some time. It's going to take some thoughts, some creativity. It's going to take putting yourself out there, and it's probably not going to be comfortable.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but that's okay.

Alison Monahan: That's the way it is.

Lee Burgess: Because it's worth it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, well I think we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.

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