



Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about what to wear; specifically, capsule wardrobes for interviewing and jobs and just generally what we have learned recently about cleaning out our closets. 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 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. Today, we're chatting about something that we actually end up talking about a lot, which is what to wear; specifically, the idea of creating a capsule wardrobe. And we don't really talk about clothes because either of us particularly loves fashion, which is not true.

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: But both of us have recently had experiences of cleaning out our closet, realizing what we do and don't use, and also traveling. So some of these lessons have surprised us and allowed us to live a more minimal clothing life.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So, guys, if you're listening, there are definitely lessons for you here, as well. But we also have a [specific men's style podcast](#) with an expert that we can link to in the show notes, so you can get some of your tips there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's always interesting to me because we periodically go through our Google Analytics and our What to Wear blog posts are still so popular. So, I think it always comes up that people want to talk more about this subject, and I think it's because how to dress professionally or comfortably or how to budget or just not how to get overwhelmed by this, especially as you enter a new profession, can be really stressful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I think clothing is stressful for a lot of people for a lot of different reasons. I'm definitely not a person who loves to go shopping. In fact, I kind of hate to go shopping. And I also basically wear the same thing pretty much all the time. But then it really throws me for a loop when I have something else that I need clothes for.



Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. So as we were talking about, we've both kind of gone through this shift, I think, of thinking about clothes and how to dress ourselves a little bit differently. So, Alison, why don't you start? Share a bit about how you've recently started to change your perspective on clothes and what you've needed based on what's been going on in your life.

Alison Monahan: Well, a lot of this came for me when I moved to Mexico, and I thought I was just going to stay there for a few months. So, obviously, I pared down my wardrobe drastically. I took everything out of my closets because I was going to be subletting my apartment. Moved it all to my garage. Actually, still, three years later, I now have some very nice clothing sitting in my garage from my life as a lawyer, in a hanger-type thing. But it was fascinating, because I brought very minimal stuff with me, and I found out I still didn't wear 3/4 of it. And then, of course, when I came back I had to go through stuff I hadn't touched in years. I mean, occasionally I've opened the garage closet, but there are literally thousands of dollars' worth of clothing down there. There are nice suits, there are nice Thomas Pink shirts. And it's kind of like, "Am I ever going to wear this again?"

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: But then, what do you do with this expensive shirt? I think there's a lot of angst around this. And then everybody has pressures around what do you look like, and do you look presentable, and do you feel good about it. I think we were talking about a book that I picked up recently, I think it's called [Beyond Beautiful](#). And it was a really interesting idea where she's like, "For women, you're kind of given this message that if you're not beautiful or attractive, you have to somehow aspire to that." We don't tell men that.

Lee Burgess: It's true.

Alison Monahan: Nobody's out telling Donald Trump he needs to lose weight to live his best life. And so, it was a really intriguing kind of shift away from body positive, we're all beautiful. Her point is, "Why does it matter? Why is it so important?" I think that, to me, was really eye-opening. I was like, "Yeah, why does it matter? I don't care."

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Why do I feel this pressure to be like, "Oh, have to be beautiful all the time"? That's ridiculous.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think that as you're entering a new profession, it's an interesting time to think about what you want that image to be. How much do you care



about that kind of stuff? I think for women, especially, it's how much time do you want to invest in...

Alison Monahan: The hair, the nails, the makeup, everything. And a lot of this really depends on where you live, let's be honest.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Because different parts of the country, you can get away with different stuff.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, in Texas, I don't feel like I could walk out of the house... In fact, we met someone at a conference once who said, "Oh, it's so liberating to be in San Francisco because when I'm at home in Texas, I feel like I can't walk out of the house without perfect hair and makeup." And we're like, "Oh, yeah, we don't do that here. That is not a thing."

Lee Burgess: I have to go to an event tonight, and I was thinking I might curl my hair. That's my big...

Alison Monahan: I'm basically like, "Oh, I should probably wash my hair today if I have to go out." Maybe I'll do a five-minute makeup job. But it's just a very different reality that she had where she's like, "If I leave the house without makeup, people start calling me, being like, 'Are you sick? What's happening?'"

Lee Burgess: I just don't have the energy for that.

Alison Monahan: Well, that's why we live in San Francisco.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So, my recent lessons around this were... So, I've been pregnant twice in the last five years, and eventually your clothes stop fitting, so you have to basically create this idea of almost a capsule wardrobe, because you have to start buying individual pieces. And you really start to... Most of us I think break yourself of this problem of, "What if I wear the same sweater twice a week?" or, "What if I wear this gray sweater over this dress, and then I wear it over this other thing?" And it's like, "Well, how many gray sweaters am I going to buy while I'm huge and pregnant?" You're only huge and pregnant for a short period of time. And I would also just buy what I would need. I would wait until I could not wear certain pants anymore, and then I would have to go buy pants. And I'd buy these blue leggings and black leggings, and then I would just kind of alternate blue and black leggings.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I'm a big fan of the same exact item in multiple colors.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But it was very freeing. And I think getting dressed, it was like, "Oh, what's clean?", of these five to 10 things that I could actually use. And I think that I started to realize how wasteful and how much energy I was spending trying to



find things that looked good in my closet on a normal day-to-day basis when I'm like, "I only have these clothes that fit." And then I just looked like myself in them. And when you're pregnant, most women, I think, there's this freedom in it of like, "This is how I look. I can't really do anything about it."

Alison Monahan: "This is my bikini body."

Lee Burgess: Right. "This is my bikini body. I'm embracing it." And I think there's a freedom that comes with that. Then I think there's all this kind of crazy pressure of getting your body back, which is a total farce, because once you have birthed children and fed children, you go to a different body. You find your new body, because your old body is gone. But I think that there are also some really important lessons with love and kindness of dressing a body that has birthed babies. You could be breastfeeding and are not losing weight as fast as you would like, or you're being told you're supposed to lose weight. And then how are you dressing that body? And the fact that then you are in-between your clothes – maybe your pre-baby clothes don't fit, but your maternity clothes look crazy on you because you don't have a gigantic belly.

And so, I think I really learned about this idea of kind of focusing on what I have and what I need for where I am. And then you start to realize that there's a whole bunch of stuff in your closet that maybe you haven't touched in years and that you probably don't need to be holding on to, and maybe you shouldn't be investing in stuff that you can't wear at that moment.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think that's true. I mean, I think a lot of this is just about what choices you are making. And I think a lot of this, for people who are in law school, as you mentioned, is kind of like what image do you want to be presenting? And there could be all kinds of pressure around that.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm.

Alison Monahan: I remember having conversations when I was doing job interviews or clerkship interviews about, do you have to wear a skirt suit? And I'm just like, "That's not how I look. This is so ridiculous. Are we really talking about this?"

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: But we were talking about it. And sometimes I put on the skirt.

Lee Burgess: So, I think we've used this terminology, but it might behoove us to take a second to just define what a capsule wardrobe is, because I think if you Google it, there are definitely different definitions. But basically, the idea is you buy core pieces – some pants, maybe a couple of dresses. But basically, very basic pieces, usually of a high quality, so you can wear them a lot and wash them a lot. And



then you add on to that a touch of trendy items. Not like a whole wardrobe of trendy items, but maybe it's like a statement necklace or shoes or a bag or something like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Like a fun colored shirt.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Or a jacket, or whatever it might be. But your core wardrobe pretty much stays the same.

Alison Monahan: And this may be seasonal.

Lee Burgess: It's true, depending on where you live. We kind of live in a place with one season.

Alison Monahan: Right. But like in New York, you're going to have a different set of capsule pieces for the summer versus the winter.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think you can think about it as in the way you would pack for a trip. Typically, if you read about the best way to pack, you pick a color scheme. Is it going to be black, or is it going to be brown? And then it's like you maybe take two pairs of pants, but then you take five different tops, or two pairs of pants and one dress, and then you have different pieces to mix and match. So if you're gone for two weeks, it looks like you have two weeks' worth of clothing. I think there are some interesting blogs out there and things that can show you how... I think there was one I saw a while back that was like, "With these five pieces, I can create 20-30 outfits."

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: And it's really possible when you start to think about it. So, if you look at your professional wardrobe or even your personal wardrobe through this lens and say, "Okay, I have a job that's going to be five days a week. I probably need some black slacks and maybe a skirt." But you're not going to want to have five very specific looks, because you want to be able to slightly switch them up, so the next week you can revamp a lot of that stuff.

Alison Monahan: Right. And if something's at the cleaners.

Lee Burgess: And have a new wardrobe. Right, exactly. So, you're really limiting your trendy items. You're investing in pieces that are going to last a bit longer. So even though individual items might end up costing a bit more, you're not buying as many items. And so the idea is that you're saving money in the end, because you're not buying 10 pairs of jeans. You're buying two pairs of jeans.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And you can also look for sales. I hit an amazing Bloomingdale's sale the other day where it's like 50% off at clearance. And I'm like, "Oh, okay, you can buy things at that point."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. I know the Nordstrom annual sale is happening while we're recording this.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So you can kind of keep an eye out. If you buy these more expensive pieces on sale, you're going to get a much higher quality item that is much more likely to last. Typically. Not always.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: But if you're smart about it, you can get pieces that you can wear literally 10 or 20 years.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Which is really nice. Heck, some of my... I just said "heck". I've been hanging out with small children this weekend. But one of the things I've learned is sometimes you invest in T-shirts because you're like, "Oh, I'll just get these cheap T-shirts." And then they're constantly getting holes in them. And I get really frustrated, because then I have to expend energy to replace them. It makes me really angry, because I'm like, "I don't have time to go find new T-shirts."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you're better off finding something that fits, that's attractive on you, and that seems to be pretty high quality, and then purchasing that. I mean, assuming you have a reason to wear it, that sort of thing. I definitely am guilty of purchasing items for the life that I thought, or somehow in some weird deluded version of the life that I thought I had.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: It seemed to happen to me mostly when I went to expensive boutique stores, like when I first started being a lawyer. I literally had nothing to wear, and I basically presented myself and was like, "Okay, so I'm starting a job as a lawyer. I need to be dressed. Please dress me." And a lot of the stuff they gave me, some of it I'd wear all the time, but some of the pieces, it was like, "Wow, that is really beautiful." I have never worn it.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: It was expensive. I feel bad about that skirt.
- Lee Burgess: I know. It's true. So, one of the things that I think every law student ends up having to invest in is this idea of a suit – either one or usually two suits for some



interviews. When you're looking to invest in this, I think approaching it from kind of this capsule perspective of buying suits that can be reimaged in different ways, makes a lot of sense. I remember I had a friend who wore red suits to interviews. And I was like...

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow. That's a little intense.

Lee Burgess: That's a little intense. But also, how do change the red suit? If you wear the red suit to your first round and then you show up in the red suit for the callbacks, they're like, "Oh, that's the girl in the red suit." My suits, I had a black suit, and then I had this kind of brownish-gray suit. And I could make those look completely different.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think I had a black set which was skirt and pants, and then I had, I think, two different pinstripe, kind of subtle pinstripes. But for me, I went more crazy with the shirts – for the black, obviously, not for the pinstripes.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: That was white.

Lee Burgess: That was a lot. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I think it was a Brooks Brothers. It was something super conservative that I found really boring. But it was completely appropriate to everything I wore it to. And then I kind of jazzed it up by getting some really loud Thomas Pink shirts, with pink stripes and purple stripes. And there, people did comment sometimes, like, "Wow, that shirt is really pretty brave." I'm like, "Brave? It's a shirt. Come on." Under a Brooks Brothers super conservative suit. For me, I felt like I wanted to express a little bit of personality, but not be the person in the red suit.

Lee Burgess: Right. So one of the things, especially if you're planning on doing interviews where you're going to need to travel, is when you start shopping for a suit and what you're going to invest in, you want to make sure that it can be packable.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think this is where people sometimes get it wrong. They think, "Oh, I'll go to UNIQLO and buy my suit there." And it's like that is probably cotton. You probably need something that's wool, that is not going to wrinkle as much. You've got to think, are you going to have to get this dry cleaned when you arrive in order to wear it? That does not seem like a reasonable thing to do.

Lee Burgess: Right.



- Alison Monahan: So, this is definitely one of those places where thinking a little bit more about the material and the weight of it and the quality of it, I think is going to make your life easier in the long run.
- Lee Burgess: And when I was doing the podcast with Douglas Hand, who was the guest on the guys podcast when we were talking about style – he was saying that there's a great opportunity for buying secondhand items, now especially through things like [threadUP](#) and [The RealReal](#). And consignment stores, too. But depending on where you live, it may not be as possible. But you can do some very targeted shopping, and with a little bit of notice, you can probably buy some of these pieces at a heavy discount and be able to get a better quality piece that will travel better. I mean, the reality, is if the fabric is made out of different material, it's going to...
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it really just comes, a lot of it, down to fabric.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, that's another thing that you can consider. Let's say you're listening to this and you're a 1L and you're thinking, "Well, I may need to be interviewing in the winter or the spring." Then maybe starting to do some online test shopping, because it may take you a few tries to get what you need. But there are definitely some ways that you can invest in some higher value items without paying these exorbitant prices.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You don't want to do what I did, which was find out you had an interview scheduled over Christmas, and then I happened to be in Atlanta, where my grandmother lived, and I did not have a suit. And so, I'm trying to buy a conservative suit for law firm interviews in Atlanta at the Nordstroms or whatever. I mean, everything they had was pink and ruffly and it was just a totally different style to me. I literally couldn't buy anything, which, I'm pretty sure is how I ended up with Brooks Brothers when I returned to New York.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, definitely thinking about fabric and making sure it's packable. And I think you want to think about your shirts, too. If you don't like to iron...
- Alison Monahan: And how you're going to pack them.
- Lee Burgess: And how you're going to pack them. I think that for women, one of the challenges is, especially if you're someone who's a little more busty, you have got to watch the buttons. I think a lot of times we are told, "This is the uniform." And then if you look frumpy and kind of unkempt in that, and you don't feel good, that's not going to present yourself in the way you want to be presented. Button-up shirts, collared shirts, do not look good on me, and so, I just freed myself and was like, "I will not wear them."





- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You can wear a shell. There's certain ones that are cut more feminine. That was actually why I bought the Thomas Pink ones, is they were cut for boobs and not square all the way down. So, they basically were cut for women. And again, they were pricey, but in the end, they fit me a lot better than most other things would have.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I primarily wore shells, and they were great. I never complained about them, I always looked good. And I didn't have to worry about buttons moving or anything like that.
- Alison Monahan: And again, it depends totally on the area.
- Lee Burgess: Right, where you're interviewing and what your build is like. But I think the key when you go start trying things on is you want to balance that, "What am I supposed to look like?" with, "What am I going to be confident in?" And you don't want to be fidgeting with your clothes. It's very distracting.
- Alison Monahan: No. And you don't want to look like you're wearing some outfit that you don't feel comfortable; some costume. Sometimes people feel like they're dressing up in a costume, and I think that can be problematic.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: You've got to find some way to kind of harmonize looking like a professional with looking like yourself and feeling like yourself. And there are all kinds of reasons that this could be challenging for people.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Luckily, there are a lot more options now, I think. But you're still going to have to really give a lot of this some thought, in terms of developing your professional style.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Taking elements of the way that you dress and incorporating them in, but remembering that especially for interviews and when you're a young, starting out professional, you want to probably err on the more conservative side, because you don't want people talking about how wild you are.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I feel like there are certain things that are always going to be basically appropriate, and then you go off that script as you wish; hopefully, for a good reason. Not just because.
- Lee Burgess: Right. So, I think this idea of developing your first professional wardrobe can be a big challenge. My friends, especially who worked at DAs offices or US



attorneys' offices, where you have to wear suits every day – that can be a real challenge all of a sudden out of the gate.

Alison Monahan: Honestly, I feel like that's easier in some ways than business casual, because a suit is a uniform.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: If you have, say, three different suits that you can mix and match pieces from – you've got your skirt, you've got your pants, you've got your shoes. You just throw it all together and walk out of the house. You're always going to look fine. Business casual is a whole other place.

Lee Burgess: That's true. Yeah. But I think business casual is where the capsule wardrobe can be very helpful.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. I mean, ideally, you want to make your business casual wardrobe essentially as easy as the suit wardrobe.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, if you are thinking, "Okay, well, then how do I build this capsule wardrobe?" – you really have to look at your life and just decide what are these core pieces going to be, for the office or for your personal life. So for the office, you might need a pair of tan pants, gray pants, black pants.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.

Lee Burgess: Or a skirt or two, or a dress, or a blazer, or some sweaters. You really just start to take these core pieces and say, "Okay, with these different necklaces or these different shoes, I can start to make these outfits look very different." If you're really struggling, I think this can be a place where, depending on if you get the right person, you can make... I think you can still make appointments at Nordstrom and someone will take you around. When I had to get a wardrobe for my summer associate job, because I hadn't worked in an office formally in a couple of years and my stuff was falling apart at that point, I went to Nordstrom and it was basically like, "Hey, I have this new job at a law firm. Here is my budget and I've got to come up with something to wear." And she did. She was like, "Here are some black pants. Here are some tan pants."

Alison Monahan: This is what people do.

Lee Burgess: This is what people do.

Alison Monahan: And they love fashion.

Lee Burgess: Right. And they love it.



- Alison Monahan: They love dressing you.
- Lee Burgess: And they will often tell you... If anyone's very good, they will tell you, "No, that's not for you." And I think that that is very interesting as well.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think asking for help from whomever on this, even if it's just a friend who has a good eye for these things, and is organized and logical and kind of understands what you need. It also depends where you work. I mean, I went out and got this very nice business casual wardrobe. And then I went to work at a firm that basically everyone wore jeans every day. So, okay, that was probably a waste of time and energy.
- Lee Burgess: Right. So, we mentioned that the consignment shops can be interesting places to check out if you're looking for individual items. I think the other thing that, if you live in an area or go to a law school where you don't have access to large department stores, [Amazon Wardrobe](#) is kind of fascinating. I don't know, have you done this?
- Alison Monahan: No.
- Lee Burgess: I've done this with shoes more, but I know you can do it with cloths. Without paying for it, you can basically order a whole bunch of stuff to be sent to you.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.
- Lee Burgess: And you have a week to try it on, and then you send back whatever you don't want.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, I've not heard of this.
- Lee Burgess: So here's the warning. I did this with shoes. You have to really tell yourself how much you're allowed to keep. Because the problem was, I kept more – one extra pair that I wasn't supposed to keep. But I did have a situation where I was looking for a pair of black boots. And I wear a size 10, which is a pretty big women's size, and often times, stores won't always have size 10s. And so, I just went on Amazon and I was like, "Okay, send me five pairs of these black boots, all that are my size." They arrived, I tried on all five, I picked one and I sent the rest back. So, maybe not the smallest carbon footprint for shopping, but on the other hand, it can get you what you need, especially for an event or if you're looking for a great pair of heels and you're like, "I need a pair of black heels." You can do it that way. So, if you're feeling stretched for time in a way that you want to be able to try stuff on without spending money and then having to return things – Amazon, like most things in life, has already solved that problem.



- Alison Monahan: Right. Have you ever tried any of these online shopping subscription services – [Stitch Fix](#), or what are some other ones?
- Lee Burgess: There's [M.M.LaFleur](#), which is a newish one that does more professional wardrobes.
- Alison Monahan: I did see a Stitch Fix in one of the metro stations in San Francisco. They've unblanketed it. I'm like, "Oh, your kids can do it. You can do it. Your husband can do it."
- Lee Burgess: So, I did Stitch Fix...
- Alison Monahan: Oh, I am mispronouncing it, but whatever.
- Lee Burgess: That's fine. Like three or four years ago. I definitely think that the subscription boxes can be helpful or not helpful. For me, I ended up keeping stuff that I didn't necessarily need. It was just it kept coming.
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Oh, that's kind of cute."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, it just kept coming to my house. You can use these services to make very specific requests. So if you're like, "I need jeans", then they'll send you more jeans.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: So it can help. Or if you're really lost, you tell them about your body type and they're supposed to send you things that look good on you. But then I also started to find that sometimes the pieces became repetitive. So, I think you've got to see whether it works for you. But there's very little harm in trying some of these services, because...
- Alison Monahan: You can just send it all back.
- Lee Burgess: You can send it all back. And if you buy a few things, it really becomes a wash. But if you are one of those people who has trouble dressing themselves, you could say, "I'm starting a professional job and I need help."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You could basically build your capsule wardrobe, maybe, and then take a pass.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. So I think that it's worth trying things out, especially if you are someone who just can't drag themselves to the mall.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. We used to use one that was founded by a former lawyer, actually. Unfortunately, I think they're not really around anymore. But they would go shopping for you and come to your house. That was pretty magic.

Lee Burgess: That was great. Yeah. I think she moved to Texas, actually. I follow her Instagram.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. That was great.

Lee Burgess: It was.

Alison Monahan: Loved it.

Lee Burgess: Yep. So the other piece of this is kind of simplifying your closets and doing a closet clean out, which I think is going to be one of my goals for my next year. My birthday's coming up and it's on my list of things to do, is control my closet more. But I have been kind of taking small bites at dealing with my stuff. I went through and decided a while back that I was going to clean out my lingerie dresser. I found an entire drawer of socks that I didn't even know I had.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Lee Burgess: No joke. And most of those socks had holes in them and were literally unwearable.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I actually just last week ordered some more socks, because the socks that I had all had holes in them. It was a six-pack of different colors, and I wore them every day for two years, and they have holes in them. Literally, I was like, "Oh, it's going to be such a hassle to find." And I just had to go on Amazon and find the order I placed two years ago and buy the same ones. And now I have them and it's really magic. None of my socks have holes in them, and I can throw out all the other ones.

Lee Burgess: Right. I did this exercise and then I went to Target and I was like, "I will just replace these socks." Then I opened it up and I'm like, "All these socks are wearable. Amazing." They all have matches. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's a minor annoyance that continues unless you deal with it.

Lee Burgess: It is. And the other part of this is, what do you do with all the stuff once you clean out your closet? I think, depending on where you live... In the Bay Area, you can put them out with your garbage and they will recycle the fabric. So you don't have to throw things away. But I think it can also be perplexing for folks when they're like, "What do I do with all the socks that have holes?"



Alison Monahan: Yeah. I feel bad about this sock that has a hole in it. Well, it's a sock. You had a nice life with the sock. You wore the sock, and the sock is like...

Lee Burgess: The sock needs to move on.

Alison Monahan: It needs to go on to a different place. And that's okay.

Lee Burgess: And that's okay. I think there's the art of tidying up, the [Marie Kondo](#) stuff – "Does this bring me joy?" But another rule that I have seen a fashion blogger talk about was this idea of, I shouldn't keep something if it doesn't work with three other things in my closet. So the idea that you just shouldn't have these kind of one-off pieces.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Which I think is actually a pretty decent rule. If you have a jacket that you can't wear with three things, maybe it doesn't have a place in your house.

Alison Monahan: Right. Exactly. Or three different scenarios, at least.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Maybe it's something very specific. But yeah, maybe if it's some incredibly memorable dress that you can literally only wear once, it's like, "Well, why did you buy that?"

Lee Burgess: Right. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Go to Rent the Runway for that.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So, that is a great segue because I know that you and I have both tried out Rent the Runway and many, many moons ago, like six years or something ago, we went and saw one of the founders of Rent the Runway talk.

Alison Monahan: Who was a great speaker.

Lee Burgess: She was a great speaker.

Alison Monahan: Still remember some of the stuff she talked about.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And they are a successful business partnership, as well. It's two women. And they're both named Jennifer, I think.

Alison Monahan: Oh, weird.



Lee Burgess: I think they have the same name.

Alison Monahan: Must be confusing for people.

Lee Burgess: I know. But people think we're the same person.

Alison Monahan: When they don't think you're a man.

Lee Burgess: And that's true. They do sometimes think I'm a man. You can Google us. It's pretty clear. But anyway-

Alison Monahan: They're going to send us an email, Lee is a woman. Thanks.

Lee Burgess: I am a woman.

Alison Monahan: Note that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But you and I have both kind of experimented with Rent the Runway. But you've been doing it kind of recently for some of the travel you've been doing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, I joined Rent the Runway, the unlimited program because I needed... We were going to this conference in DC in the summer, and then I also needed an outfit for that same trip for a baby's first birthday party Hawaiian-themed in Arkansas.

Lee Burgess: A long story about that. We don't have time to dive into the whole story.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's a whole other podcast. But when I'm looking mentally through my closet, I'm not seeing anything that really jumps out at me as being appropriate for any of these occasions. So, I did Rent the Runway unlimited so I could get four different items and kind of mix and match and get some stuff for the conference and get some options for the event. And it worked pretty well. Because what really works for me is it turns out in major cities like San Francisco they actually have a place you can go and try stuff on. So, you can order stuff on their website or the app, but you can also go try stuff on. So for me, now, it's almost like a habit. So I'm like, "Oh, I'm going up to Tahoe this week, so I need a dress because it's warmer than San Francisco. Let me just pop by Rent the Runway and I'll trade in a piece of a heavy sweater that I don't need because it's not that cold, and I'll just walk out with a dress." So I think that really worked for me, but that kind of requires that you be near a store.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. But I think that in a law firm situation, especially if you're trying to conserve money...



Alison Monahan: Oh, but if I was in a law firm and I worked downtown, I would totally do that. You can basically just go in, pick up an outfit for the next week, the next day even. Even now I kind of use it as my, "I don't feel like buying something for this event" type of thing. And that event can literally be like, I'm going to a barbecue. I can find a cute barbecue outfit at the Rent the Runway store. So I think it's worth considering, particularly if you are working in a professional environment in a major city and you just want to go in and switch stuff out constantly. There is really no limit.

Lee Burgess: Right. And they dry clean everything. I mean, it's like you're not paying for that on top of everything.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. For me, I actually switched out a pair of pants and got the same size because I was like, "Well, they're ready to be washed, so I'll take them back." And then I couldn't find anything I liked better, and they happened to have the same size hanging on the rack, and I was like, "Well, I liked these. I would wear these again." So I walked out with a clean pair.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. That's amazing. Yeah, so it's interesting. They also have things like accessories that you can rent. I did it for a little bit. And that was kind of interesting, to be able to rent statement necklaces or stuff like that, to take some of those capsule pieces and change how they look. You can do that with accessories.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And you can also get a lot of sort of professional-looking dresses and things like that if you need to have more business professional but not suit-based. Maybe online they have more actual suits. But I think it definitely works for your New York summer associate position, for example.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And that's the other thing about the summer jobs, is often times you don't necessarily want to invest in a whole wardrobe that might feel outdated in two years when you go back to work.

Alison Monahan: And if you're traveling from a different place, you're moving with a couple of suitcases. I think this could be a great option for somebody in that scenario.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, worth investigating. And it's a pretty amazing business, actually, what they've built. I think they were just valued at a billion dollars.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's pretty crazy.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, if you are just listening to this and your head is spinning because you don't like clothing shopping and you just feel like you can't do it, I think this is where some fashion blogs can come into play. Shops like Nordstrom or other big department stores. One of the clothing or the fashion blogs that I follow is a





woman who definitely targets more a 30 to 40-something audience, but I think one of the things that's interesting is she has a lot of professional dress. And I think what can be tough is when you are in your 20s and early 30s is making that shift from, "I'm in my 20s and early 30s; what am I supposed to wear in an office environment?"

Alison Monahan: Right. So people will take you seriously.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. But the one thing that struck me about her blog is she was just very honest about her discussions with women. And I think this goes back to the book that you were mentioning earlier about being beautiful. What's the name? I totally forgot it.

Alison Monahan: Beyond Beautiful, I think.

Lee Burgess: Beyond Beautiful. It was just about what we do as women with clothes. We keep clothes in our closets that don't fit. We buy clothes that don't fit with this idea of, maybe it will fit.

Alison Monahan: Right. One day, I'll fit into this.

Lee Burgess: One day, I'll fit into this. And I think as someone who's had two kids, it's hard, because you're like, "Will that fit again? That won't fit again." And her whole thing was, if it doesn't fit, it shouldn't be in your closet. You can either get rid of it, or if you just can't let it go, you put it in a bin or a box and move it to the garage or move it out. But there's nothing good that comes from keeping... I guess if you have a goal set of jeans or whatever, that can be kind of toxic, as well. But it's no benefit to having a bunch of stuff in your closet that you can't wear. What's in your closet should be stuff that you wear, and if you don't wear it, it should leave.

Alison Monahan: I think that's a good approach.

Lee Burgess: I think it's a very kind of freeing approach, when you think about it. Because I think we've all been guilty of buying something and saying that we will work our way into it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: It's a terrible idea.

Alison Monahan: It's a terrible idea. I tended to buy pieces mostly for a life that didn't fit.

Lee Burgess: That's true, too.



- Alison Monahan: These were aspirational pieces for experiences that I thought maybe I would have at one point. Don't do that, unless you have... That's why Rent the Runway is great. I'm like, "Well, now if I ever need to attend that sort of fancy cocktail party I was planning on attending, I'll just go there and get something."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, it can be really great. And I have friends, especially I've talked about post-pregnancy bodies and things like that. They're like, "My body is constantly changing. Why am I going to invest in a whole bunch of clothes, knowing that I don't know what I'm going to look like in three or four months?"
- Alison Monahan: It's basically like, clothing as a service.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, it's fascinating. But I think the moral of the story is that with a little creativity, I think that you can save some money, which is good for just about everyone in law school, and look professional, and actually de-stress. There are reasons why people like Barack Obama and...
- Alison Monahan: Steve Jobs.
- Lee Burgess: Steve Jobs, they simplified their clothes. And who's the lady who's being sued for fraud? Therma... The blood test?
- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah. Elizabeth Theranos or whatever.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Theranos was the product. But anyway, she dressed like Steve Jobs. She only wore...
- Alison Monahan: She wanted to be Steve Jobs.
- Lee Burgess: Right. She did. But anyway, there are reasons why people choose to really limit their choices, because it becomes so stressful. And it's important to remember, I think, when we see women who we consider super polished – they have stylists and people who shop for them.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Someone's handing them those clothes.
- Lee Burgess: Somebody hands them those clothes, or they get those clothes tailored to look perfect for them. I think we all have to check ourselves in the social media world to have realistic expectations about things.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I had a certain pair of shoes that when I was a lawyer and I was going to an event, I pretty much always wore. And it got to the point where a friend of mine who had seen me leaving the house was like, "Oh, are you going to a lawyer event?" I'm like, "How do you know?" She's like, "You have your lawyer shoes on."



- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: They were I think black patent leather loafers or something. It was just one of those things where she's like, "Yeah, I know, you're going to a lawyer thing." But it was really easy.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. One other tip that I should raise is that you should not be scared of getting somebody to tailor your clothes for you. I think that is something that a lot of people feel uncomfortable about.
- Alison Monahan: I definitely have jeans I've bought that need to be hemmed by a couple of centimeters, and they've been hanging in my closet for multiple years, unworn, because I did not take them to the tailor.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. Take stuff to the tailor, because I think that if you are someone who isn't the exact size of the stuff on the rack, that a little bit of investment, especially if you're buying a piece for an interview or something like that, and the jacket's sleeves need to be shortened...
- Alison Monahan: Well, and a lot of places, higher-end places, will actually tailor for you.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think Nordstrom does.
- Alison Monahan: Bloomingdale's does, as well, yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Bloomingdale's does. Yeah. So you want to make sure that you utilize all of those options, because having it actually fit your body is going to make it look a lot better.
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. Well, with that, unfortunately, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review or 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 Lee or Alison at [lee@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:lee@lawschooltoolbox.com) or [alison@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto: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!

## **RESOURCES:**

[Beyond Beautiful, by Anuschka Rees](#)  
[threadUp](#)  
[The RealReal](#)



[Amazon Prime Wardrobe](#)

[Stitch Fix](#)

[M.M.LaFleur](#)

[Rent the Runway](#)

[Marie Kondo](#)

[Wardrobe Oxygen blog: My Closet Cleanout Left Me Without Clothes!](#)

[Podcast Episode 158: What to Wear \(And Not to Wear\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 201: Fashion Law & Men's Fashion \(w/Douglas Hand\)](#)

[Law School Toolbox blog: Fashionably Lawyered: How to Dress the Part as a New Attorney](#)

[Law School Toolbox blog: Fashionably Lawyered: How to Dress for a Law Interview or Internship on a Budget](#)