



Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with Elizabeth Knox about getting accommodations in law school. 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 could reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are talking to Elizabeth Knox – a disability consultant who we are lucky enough to have working with us as a tutor for the Law School Toolbox and the Bar Exam Toolbox. Elizabeth, thanks for joining us on the Law School Toolbox podcast. I know we've already gotten to chat on the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast.

Elizabeth Knox: Happy to be back!

Lee Burgess: So, first I'd like to dive in to talk a little bit about how students can navigate their own advocacy, because I think this is really something that we see when students are in need of accommodations. They often don't know how to advocate for themselves. What should students first start thinking about if they see some signs that they might need accommodations, or maybe they're going into law school even knowing that they have accommodations?

Elizabeth Knox: I think first of all, it's important to acknowledge that the first year of law school is difficult for everyone. It can feel overwhelming. The style of teaching and lecturing is just very different from what you'll have in undergrad. I think that even if you had accommodations in undergrad, you might not feel like you need them in law school. You might think, "It's a professional school. I don't need this", but I say go in with an open mind. You might need them, and that's okay. There's no issue with getting what you need to be on the same playing field as everyone else in your class. You also may have coasted through undergrad without ever realizing that you might need accommodations for graduate school or professional school. That's going to look different for each student.

So, I would say if you get toward the middle of the semester and you're just feeling completely overwhelmed, and you're not processing what's happening, and you feel like... Well, you're always going to feel like the grass is greener on the other side. To me, that's a totally normal feeling. It's imposter syndrome, we all have it. But I think there's something extra, in some cases, in many cases, where you're really not getting it or you're going home and you're just feeling



completely defeated, and you don't know what to do next. Then it's time to start thinking about accommodations for different issues you might be needing to address. I think everyone is overwhelmed, but I think you'll have a sense of, "This is more than overwhelmed."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think maybe it's a good point to also talk about that there are lots of different categories that fall into this accommodations realm. We have things like you were just talking about – maybe a new diagnosis, or something maybe around a learning difference, or stress or anxiety. Clinical anxiety is something that often times students get accommodations for. But we also have any sort of physical disability. We have students who get special accommodations for... They need to be able to stand. They may have wrist injuries. They may need accommodations for hearing loss. They may need accommodations for vision. There are lots and lots of different ways that you may need accommodation. Or we also have had students who get pregnant and then they all of a sudden need accommodations for pregnancy. There's this moving target with all of this stuff, and I think a lot of times people forget that there is a way to move through the processes in your school, but you've got to start to figure out what's available to you based on your needs.

Elizabeth Knox: Exactly. I think I went into this discussion under the assumption that if someone has a physical disability or hearing loss or vision loss or things like that, they're going to know that.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Elizabeth Knox: If it's a medical condition, that they're going to request it. So I guess I'm working with the presumption that someone is discovering that they may need accommodations for the first time for that. I have a profound hearing loss. I knew well in advance that I would need certain things.

Lee Burgess: Right. But I definitely have had students who, let's say, go through some sort of medical emergency in law school. And then they don't realize that with that may come the need for even accommodations around that. I've had students who've had heart trouble and they need certain accommodations for that. Or they're on certain meds. Or even little things like maybe your school doesn't allow you to drink water during an exam and you need to be able to have the allowance to drink water. There are all sorts of things. So if you are dealing with something new for a lot of people, like pregnancy or maybe you're a nursing mom, there could be lots of different things that come up that I think students often forget that they can ask for accommodations for.

Elizabeth Knox: Right. My appendix ruptured during 3L, which was a lot of fun.

Lee Burgess: Oh my goodness.



Elizabeth Knox: And I had a scheduled internship in Washington, D.C. that I needed to get down to for the January term, and it ruptured the day after Christmas. Oh, what are we going to do? And so, I worked with a lot of different people in the school to ship the internship and make sure I could be part of it from at home. And it was a hassle, but they were able to work with me and it worked out just fine. But that kind of stuff comes up, it happens; and you need sources that are available to you.

Lee Burgess: For sure. So, going back to the student who maybe is struggling, and this is a new disability or a new learning difference they didn't plan for or go into law school knowing about. How much harder is it to typically get accommodations in law school if the student doesn't have a history of needing those accommodations?

Elizabeth Knox: It can be a challenge. You do have to show them that this is something new and that it's not something you're manufacturing, I guess, to get accommodations. I think that somebody manufacturing a disability is really rare and it's not likely to affect your ability to get accommodations. But I think it's really important to have frank, open conversations with the disabilities office or your Dean, and let them know what's going on in your life; why this is particularly difficult. I would say, I'm not sure that I would go to the professor first. I would go to the administrative staff first, because they're much better situated to help you than your professor ever will be. I would just start documenting your difficulties, and if you already have an outside therapist or doctor who is aware of these issues, have them write it down. If not, then the disabilities office may ask you to obtain the documentation. And it's a matter of just creating a paper trail. You want to do this as early as possible, so you can learn as much as possible, of course.

Lee Burgess: Right. And for learning differences, things like ADHD, which we see all the time manifest in law school, often times you have to go through some sort of academic testing to get that documentation that the school needs, especially to get things like extended time. And that doesn't exactly happen quickly. Well, nothing in this realm seems to happen quickly. So, as soon as you're getting an inkling that something is not feeling right to you, you want to start moving things along, because unfortunately sometimes these things can be expensive. But it can also take a lot of time to get everything lined up, and exams come up really quickly in law school. I think a lot of times people say, "Oh, late November", "Oh, December." We're recording this in early October and I'm still completely flummoxed that it's October. I can't process that information. And Thanksgiving is not that far away.

Elizabeth Knox: Time flies. That's why, really, if you have any inkling of something being up, you want to start taking action and documenting your own day in a diary or journal or something at least, so you have some sort of record of what's been going on.



I've even heard professors recommending, "Why don't you go talk to the disabilities office? Just go have a chat, see what's up. Maybe they can help you with what sounds to be an unreasonable struggle during office hours." Listen to what's going on and listen to yourself, and move as quick as you can. Which I can be overwhelming when you have so much going on during 1L, or any other semester, really.

Lee Burgess: I think a lot of times students don't even appreciate that there are a wide variety of accommodations that might be available to them. I think most people know about extended time because I think that get discussed a lot. But what other types of accommodations have you seen be common for students in the law school experience?

Elizabeth Knox: I know many people get note takers. Some people have an auditory processing disorder, where they can't write and hear at the same time. Note taker's an easy... Well, not easy fix, but it's a part of a solution for that. You might need extended time off from school if you have a disability that requires you to have more bed rest than others. But then, in that case you would need maybe recorded classes or a transcript of the class or, again, a note taker. That doesn't fill in the full picture. Maybe if your professor does PowerPoint, having access to the PowerPoint decks, if they don't give it to everybody, they can give it to you. There's lots of different things you can do to try to fill in the gaps.

Lee Burgess: Right. And during exam time, sometimes it can be taking it in a private room if distraction is an issue. We see that pretty commonly outside of extended time. Like I mentioned, being able to drink water or take a snack break. Nursing moms sometimes need to pump in the middle of an exam session, depending on how long it is. So, I think one of the things that I've seen students miss out on is, you have to work with the team who's supporting you, whether that's a medical doctor or it's a therapist or whoever is supporting you in this. They need to help you be very direct about what you're asking for. Because what I have seen – and I don't know if you've seen this too – is, if you're squishy on what you're asking for, then they're not going to get creative to be like, "I wonder how we can make this better for this student." They're going to say, "What are you asking for? And then I will decide if we're going to be able to give it to you."

Elizabeth Knox: I get them all the benefit of the doubt. I think they want all their students to learn and have a great experience. Certainly pass the bar exam. But it's not their job to figure out what you need. It's your job to figure out what will get you back on the path to success. And it's going to look different for every student; for every nursing mom. The amount of time you need is going to be really different.

Lee Burgess: I've seen a lot of students get hung up on this idea that it's going reflect badly on them if they do this advocacy for themselves, because they think that it will



look like to the school that they need some special help. Or maybe the other students might know something. Because everybody is so worried about their image and competition in law school, I think there's a lot of fear. So how do you recommend that people deal with those thoughts of worry about how this advocacy for themselves might reflect badly on them?

Elizabeth Knox: I know I've had a lot of clients really worried about stigma. They don't want their classmates to know that they're getting extra time. They don't want their professors to know they're getting extra time. And the good news is their professors won't know, and also the good news is with the stress of exams, people don't even remember to shower. They're certainly not going to notice who's not in the room.

Lee Burgess: So true. I could never tell you who wasn't in my room for an exam.

Elizabeth Knox: It's the last thing I would have noticed – like, "Oh, Sally's not in the room today. I bet she's getting extended time." I don't care what Sally is doing. All I want to do is survive this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I was a note taker and I was one of the people that disability services hired to give out notes. And if anything I think even that role made me pay more attention in class and be a better law student. So I think that role of the student needing that accommodation just made me better, because I couldn't give them notes that I was taking while I was reading a blog post in the middle of class instead of paying attention.

Elizabeth Knox: I think that it's a natural concern. You don't want your potential teacher or colleague to necessarily prejudge your abilities based what you are or aren't doing. But ultimately, to make professional colleagues, you have to do well in school. The first goal is to get through. And really, you're thinking about yourself a lot more than everyone else is thinking about you, I think is something I try to reinforce over and over with my clients. It feels overwhelming, it feels like everyone's scrutinizing you. But really, no one is. And if they are, then that's on them.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, what about students who find that the traditional mode of teaching in law school – the Socratic method, being cold-called on in class – really goes against the way that they feel like they're going to be successful. Maybe this is introducing anxiety and making it impossible for them to learn. Maybe they've gone to the professor and talked to them about that, but the professor's old school and was like, "Toughen up, this is part of life." What do students do? Do they give up then, or do they still have to keep working to try and make it work for them?



Elizabeth Knox: I think that is such a hard situation, and there's no one right answer to that. It's going to be so professor-dependent. I had professors who if you looked like you weren't ready for a cold call, they passed over you. But then I had others who were very meticulous about, now it's everyone who's wearing yellow's turn today. It's just so random. And that's one of the horrors and joys of law school, I guess. But I think that you do the best you can to brief your cases so you are ready. You come up with coping strategies. And I think it's really important to try to pay attention in class and focus on what the person before you said. Which I know can be incredibly challenging when you have a class of 80 and they're in the back of the room and you have no idea what they said and then the professor comes at you with, "What's your response to so-and-so?" Like, "I-I-I." Panic.

I think that more and more professors are accommodating how students are reacting, and I think there's a shift towards making things more equitable in the class, so you know when you're going to be cold-called; you're on a panel. Unfortunately it's not everyone yet. But it is getting better and I hope that all professors adopt that model, so that way at least it takes away the stress and surprise element. But until then, I think the best you can do is shoot an email to the professor, like, "Look, I've read, I'm very interested in this and I want you to know that I know all this stuff. Maybe can I come to your office hours and talk with you about it, instead of being cold called? I need it for XYZ reasons." I think you have to get creative and it's going to be incredibly professor-dependent.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a good point. And sometimes you won't know how the professor's going to react. I recently got a note from someone who had listened to one of our podcast episodes about going to office hours. And she said, "I would have never gone to talk to this very intimidating professor if you hadn't done this podcast. But then they were really nice in office hours." So, you can't be sure they're not going to be accommodating if you go to them.

Elizabeth Knox: No. I think also if there's a participation grade, it's usually a pretty small portion of your grade and the final is blind. So, in some classes, the odds of me answering this question right are pretty darn low. But I'm just not going to worry about it. I'm going to prioritize getting the reading done and my outlining done.

Lee Burgess: Right, yeah. So, one of the things that we have definitely had students deal with in the past is that their accommodations request lasts so long that it might not get done and dealt with before exam time, or right up to the exam time. So, does the student have any recourse to try and help rush this along or push the school to make a decision before exams?

Elizabeth Knox: I think that the Dean's office will be very sensitive to that fact and they understand why you want the exam. I think you can send emails and be the



squeaky wheel, constantly show up in their offices. Say, "I need this. What's the status?" You just follow up over and over and over. And you can always escalate, go up to the next level. I've heard of people going all the way to the Dean of the whole law school. Like, "I'm struggling and nobody's responding to me. Help me." And that gets things done pretty quick.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's true.

Elizabeth Knox: It's also a struggle, because I think the expectation is that most students will have applied for accommodations in the summer before. That gives time to gather all the documentation and stuff. But also, your ability to gather the documentation is sort of limited. There are different creative options. You can email the disabilities office and say, "Can you help me file for late exams?", if that's a reasonable accommodation too. "Can I take it when I come back, after I have all this done?" It's not a zero sum thing where you just fail your exam. Don't go into the exam ready to fail. That's not a good idea at all. It's a lot easier to delay the exam than to let them get you retake it, because that's not going to happen.

Lee Burgess: Right. I didn't even know that that was a possibility until I had a friend who'd had a sudden death in the family days before the exams. And she went to the school and the school allowed her to take the exams late. I remember going like, "I would have never even thought to ask for that." And I think that a professor that she was close to was like, "You're having a hard time, you shouldn't sit for your exams right now." And that was very kind of them. But I think that sometimes if you don't go to the school and express what's happening, you don't even know what the options are on the table for you.

Elizabeth Knox: Right. I definitely encourage that option. I had an illness in the family and they let me fly down to Texas during exams from Boston. I came back and took it. It was not a big deal. Different schools will have different policies, but you might be surprised by your school's flexibility on that front.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Sometimes people are nicer and more helpful than you think. I think as law students, we often assume everything is going to be so combative. And that's not always the case.

Elizabeth Knox: They're all watching their attrition numbers. They don't anyone to drop out over an exam.

Lee Burgess: Right. We've also gotten some questions from listeners and students who've had medical issues come up – like you said, having your appendix burst in law school, which sounds awful. I had a student whose appendix burst while she was studying for the bar exam, so that was also awful. She passed though. She managed to get it together.



Elizabeth Knox: That's great.

Lee Burgess: I know. So, what do you do if something like that happens in the semester, so you start missing classes or an exam? How do you go about getting accommodations or talking to the school to handle that situation?

Elizabeth Knox: I think it's a lot like we just talked about. You go to the Dean or disability services or whoever's in charge of student life. Every school has a different name for this. But you tell them what's going on in your life and say, "What are my options? What have students done in the past?" If you miss too many classes, then maybe it's time to take a withdrawal and to extend your stay at the law school by a semester. That's totally reasonable too. It can be very expensive, depending on when it happens in the semester. But you have to look at the official policy, see how many classes you're allowed to miss. Some professors care not at all if you miss all their classes as long as you keep up. Others are sticklers. So you can miss twice and then, "We're going to have to have a talk before you're allowed to miss any more."

I had friends who had babies during law school and they needed to take three weeks off, which is nothing, but enough to get back into class. And professors worked with them, made sure they got notes and recorded classes. I think it's important to be upfront with the school so they know what's going on. You're not just slacking off and missing for no reason. Frank, honest conversation.

Lee Burgess: And early. I think when you find out what's going on, you want to reach out to the school as early as you can. You don't want them to be like, "What happened to Lee? She's been gone for a month." And then you pop up again and say, "Oh, now I don't know what to do with this problem." I think they need to be part of that first line of communication.

Elizabeth Knox: Absolutely.

Lee Burgess: And I think that if you have any other situations, like you might have academic based scholarships or things like that, you also want to make sure you're in communication with the school, so if you have to withdraw or you have to delay your exams or something happens, you aren't at risk of possibly losing a scholarship or something that you're counting on.

Elizabeth Knox: I know that different schools have very strict rules about who gets to keep the scholarships and under what conditions. The impression I get is that some schools are looking for reasons to take away the scholarships. In those cases, it's really important to stay up front with them, so that way they're on notice that it's for a disability reason or some other specific reason. If they have no notice, then they have no reason to honor that after the fact. It's a tough situation. It's



going to vary state by state what they're allowed to do and not allowed to do in terms of granting and denying continued scholarships.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But more information is good, because what you don't want is to plan on a scholarship and then having it disappear, and then you don't have your funding in place for school.

Elizabeth Knox: Leave a paper trail. Every time you talk to someone, email them to confirm, "This is what we talked about." You want that in your back pocket, always.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, keep things. We always talk about Trello and Asana and all those tools that we use as a team. I could see a board where you track all these conversations, because it's very hard to keep up with all of this stuff. And it's very hard especially if you're dealing with a stressful situation, because our memories aren't at our best when we're super stressed.

Elizabeth Knox: Right. They might figure you're gone to Paris for two months or in the hospital for a month. They don't know. Yeah, it's up to you to put that on their radar.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, we talked a little bit about the stigma around especially mental health accommodations or learning difference accommodations. And I have definitely had students in the past who refused to get accommodations because they were worried about the stigma. And that, I think, hurt their grades. It took them longer to pass the bar exam. It didn't matter how many times I had this conversation with this individual student – years, three or four years – I never won. I never won. We already talked about how most other students are not paying attention to your accommodations, because everybody's very narcissistic and self-absorbed. But how do students want to start learning the language to talk about these accommodations if it does come up with either other students or another professor or anything like that?

Elizabeth Knox: Sorry, can you repeat that last part?

Lee Burgess: How students should work on learning language to talk about their accommodations in a way with other students or other professors if it comes up. Because I think a lot of students are worried that they want to talk about it in the right way and not have it reflect poorly on them.

Elizabeth Knox: Right. That's always going to be a personal decision for someone to make. There's no reason ever to share with your classmates if you don't want to. That's totally up to you. A lot of accommodations are invisible. Like I said, nobody notices who's getting time and a half in a different room or needs a bathroom break or needs to take medication in the middle of the exam. Nobody knows any of this. So, it's totally up to you. And I think we're increasingly in a time where people are comfortable talking about their disabilities. And that's great,



but that doesn't mean everyone is. And everyone shouldn't have to be, because it's a very personal decision to make.

In terms of talking to professors, I would say if it affects your class performance, that's something you might want to introduce to them in a way that says, "I'm committed to this class, I'm capable, I'm going to do the work. But I need you to know that if it looks like I'm zoning out for whatever reason, it's not because I'm ignoring you. It's because I'm trying to process what I'm hearing. Or I sometimes need to take breaks in the middle of class so that I can come back in fully engaged." I think there are different ways to handle that conversation, depending on the professor. And ideally, you won't need to, but some professors have rules about how many times you can leave the classroom. I think in that case you need to address it. Obviously you're going to have to let disability services do it.

There are visible accommodations. I had a captioner come with me to all my classes, and people were very interested and they were like, "Oh, what is this? Can I get a copy of your transcript too?" And I said, "I don't even get a copy of the transcript usually, so no, you can't." It's not a thing that we can do, because that's the professor's intellectual property. It's her words and this is just accommodation. It ended up in a lot of funny interactions, like, "Oh, who is this? Why do we have a court reporter in the classroom?" Some accommodations are just obvious and you just work around that. I think a sense of humor always helps.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And it is funny when we were talking about people noticing things in exams. I know some of my friends had accommodations for various things. I could not tell you anyone in my class had accommodations, but I could tell you the person who lined up little figurines on their desk during the exams. She had a whole U-shaped figurine thing. So when we think about what people are paying attention to, I was more interested in the figurines two rows up from me than who was or was not there, or who was sitting closer to the bathroom, or whatever it might be.

Elizabeth Knox: Yeah. If someone has the flu, you don't want them in there. I think that going back to what we said earlier, people are not paying attention to you generally as much as you think they are.

Lee Burgess: That's true. Another thing we've heard from some students especially though, who get extended time, is they worry that the extra time could actually work to their detriment, because they might overthink or not manage their time well or almost have too much time. So, if a student has concerns about that and isn't going to reach out for accommodations, what are your thoughts on that?



Elizabeth Knox: I think it's always better to have the accommodation and reject it. Always, always. It's never worth not seeking it out because you don't think you'll use it. Because you don't know how your mind will change in November. You might realize, "Wow, it's a lot more text than I thought it was. In my time that I can use for this open book exam, I cannot possibly read this much." But if you don't use it, you don't use it. You can turn in your exam whenever you want.

Lee Burgess: Right. I've had students come up with really creative ways to make the most of that time too. I've had students with ADHD who have done full meditation mindfulness exercises to refocus their minds, or move their bodies, or stand up, or stretch. There are so many things that you can do during that time to help you perform at your best, that I think people forget about.

Elizabeth Knox: Once again, I would urge people to practice for the exam in the way that you will take the exam, so you have a real sense of what you're going to need in the exam room. So, don't necessarily take every practice exam in bed with hot chocolate next to you. Put yourself in a stressful environment in the library where there are people walking and rustling around. Unless of course you're taking your exam at home – then go for it, since that's how you take it anyway. Just different methods of preparing for the test that should show you what you'll need. And you should have a pretty good sense by exam time whether you'll need that extended time or not.

Lee Burgess: And if you are having trouble coming up with these individualized solutions based on your accommodations, I do think that this is where having a tutor or going to your academic support office to brainstorm the ways to really help yourself perform at your best under these new conditions is very important. Because sometimes you haven't thought about doing a mindfulness meditation in the middle, or you're having trouble figuring out... I've working with a lot of students especially with ADHD, where one of our jobs is to pinpoint that point where it falls apart. There always seems to be a point where the focus starts to wane. So, breaking it up into smaller chunks so you can refocus and do activities to refocus and things like that. That can be hard to do on your own. So, getting the right help, whether through your school or through an external group like ours, can give you the opportunity to have someone else help you develop this plan. Once you've fought and advocated to get these accommodations, they can help you be at your best.

Elizabeth Knox: Absolutely. I think having a great educational consultant is invaluable; someone who sees this every day, all day. Another thing I know some really successful students have done is ask their Dean of disability services to put them in touch with students who may have already graduated who have a similar disability but did well in law school, so they can just ping ideas off of. I've had students email me about how I cope with different issues that come up with hearing loss, and I love it. I'm glad they're reaching out; it's great. And the Dean always facilitates



the conversation: "Do you mind talking to so and so?" I was like, "Of course not." It's never just a blind call. It's good. And then you expand your network anyway, which is great.

- Lee Burgess: Right. And we're all learning. Even since you and I have been working together, I have learned a lot about working with someone who has a profound hearing loss. We've worked students who've had hearing losses. And I feel like the more I learn by having these conversations, the better I am to support students in that way. We're all learning, right? We have to all talk about this stuff so we can even learn different ways we can accommodate. And I think that it doesn't have to make anything harder. Even if it's just a little bit different or a little tweak of how you do something, it can make a big difference for another student or someone you work with. And I think it's kind of an amazing thing when we all are open and able to talk about this stuff without judgment.
- Elizabeth Knox: I think it's wonderful. And the more we do it, the better, and the more creative solutions everyone will have.
- Lee Burgess: Right, yeah, exactly. So, we have done [another podcast on the Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast](#) – just to put a teaser out there. You can check it out as well, because bar exam accommodations are such a big deal. We've got questions; a lot of law students are worried about getting those accommodations for the bar. So, if you have accommodations in law school, do you typically get them for the bar exam?
- Elizabeth Knox: Not typically, unless you ask for them.
- Lee Burgess: Fair point.
- Elizabeth Knox: You have to ask for them. And the better documentation you have of whatever accommodations you got in law school, the better. If you have a long record of getting extended time on exams and on the LSAT and other standardized tests, your odds of getting approved on the bar exam are much, much higher. It's another one of those things where you want to start early, just like law school accommodations.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Because this happens to a lot of students – they don't know what the word "early" means, so let's be very specific for them. If you're taking the July exam, May is not early. That is not early. People think May is early. It is not early.
- Elizabeth Knox: May is not early. The day... I think Texas, the applications open December. That's early.



Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And if you do it early, you're going to find out early, and that's great. If you do it late, sometimes you won't get the answer until days, sometimes two days before the test, which is really stressful. Also, you lose your right to appeal for that round. And I've had a lot of students have success with accommodations appeals, but you lose your opportunity to appeal if you do it at the last minute. This is not the most fun thing to do, but if this is something that you need, it's very important to do it.

And I also think that one of things you mentioned in that podcast that I've really thought about since then is the need to put the bar on notice if you've got something going on, even if you aren't sure. I think pregnancy's a great example. Putting the bar on notice that you're pregnant and that you may need certain accommodations early is better than at the end trying to scramble because now you have a sciatic nerve problem and you need to be able to take breaks because you're in continual pain.

Elizabeth Knox: Yes, they're probably not going to provide an outlet on the table in the big room for you to pump. They're just not.

Lee Burgess: Right. And I'm a big fan of pumping anywhere, but inside the bar exam room, probably not, in the middle of the test.

Elizabeth Knox: It's just not a pleasant...

Lee Burgess: No. You're like, "Excuse me, just give me a second here. No spilling milk."

Elizabeth Knox: Yeah, the earlier the better. I wouldn't say you need to tell them at five weeks pregnant, but if you know that your pregnancy's advancing along and you're probably going to nurse, then you need to tell them.

Lee Burgess: Right. And then it just makes it easier for them to have the documentation from your doctors or whatever they need, and for you to understand what you need, so if your needs change, they're not going, "Oh well, now we need to go back to the beginning. Are you even pregnant? Where's that letter?" Because these big bureaucracies, they do not move fast.

Elizabeth Knox: It's a lot easier to undo an accommodation than to get it later.

Lee Burgess: That's a very good point, yeah. So, if a student has applied for accommodations and they haven't gotten word back yet – so they're into their study period, they don't know if the bar is going to give them that extended time – do you study like you're going to get them? Or is that foolish?

Elizabeth Knox: No, study. It's easier to study again later. Go ahead and start the study program. And also, keep nagging the bar people because there are real humans there.



You can call them, like we talked about. I think absolutely, go forward like you're going to get the accommodation, because what if you get it and then you haven't studied?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And if there's ambiguity around whether or not you are going to get extended time, sometimes what I will tell folks is that they need to study under regular time conditions, and maybe do a little practice with extended time. But generally speaking, extended time is going to be easier-ish.

Elizabeth Knox: Study for the worst case scenario.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. That's a great way to put it.

Elizabeth Knox: Yeah. In any exam situation, if you know you're going to be in a loud place, study in a loud place, or just try to as much as possible.

Lee Burgess: I wanted to touch on this other topic, but I think we're going to do a future podcast on this topic. But if you need accommodations, let's say for a hearing loss or a physical accommodation or something along those lines, and you're doing job interviews, how do students need to deal with accommodations in job interviews? Do you use your school's recruiting office to help with that? Do you talk to the firms? How is it best to navigate the job process?

Elizabeth Knox: I think that's also going to vary based on the disability. But if you're doing OCI, where you're not going to have a chance to talk to every firm, because you're doing rapid fire interviews, then I would talk to your school office or careers office to see what the best practice is there. Maybe they could put out a blanket notice to all your interviewers, "Hey, you guys have a deaf or vision impaired or whatever person coming through. And you need to know this is what to expect." I think those interviews are really short. You're not going to want to spend the interview talking about the accommodation you want to set in place.

And that's just a specific kind of interview. For your average interview, where you set it up yourself and you go somewhere and talk to a judge or talk to anyone else in an HR office, then you would just have to weigh it out: Do I need an accommodation during the interview? What does that look like? And what is the most reasonable way to ask for it? If you don't need an interview accommodation but you do need a job accommodation, you might want to think about waiting until after you have an offer, and be like, "By the way, I'm also going to need a standing desk", or specific different accommodation. There's no reason you can't bring it up during the interview, but there's a lot of other things to take into consideration before you do that. Interviews are supposed to be showcasing what you can do; why you're going to fit their office best. It's just a bragging period, so you need to focus on that more than, "Oh, this is what we're going to need to do immediately."



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's really good to take into consideration. Well, as we wind up here, I think a couple of the messages that I've heard through our discussion today is that, ask early and often. If there's something that you need to level the playing field, try and worry less about how it's going to make you look and try and just advocate early and often. The earlier that you do these things, the more likely it is you're going to get what you need. But it's also going to not reflect back on you, because everybody appreciates advocating for themselves. They don't love when people do things at the last minute. But if you are on the ball and showing that you've got this under control, I think that's going to give you the highest likelihood of success.
- Elizabeth Knox: And if you need more documentation or an appeal, you have room for that.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Any other final thoughts that you want law students to think about, about getting their accommodations?
- Elizabeth Knox: I think just focus on the fact that while there is still stigma involved with many disabilities, most students are not actually paying attention to you. It's the main takeaway always. And also, like you said, act early and often. The more you practice self-advocacy, the easier it gets.
- Lee Burgess: Absolutely. And let's all just keep talking to each other about how best we can work together. Because I think that the more we all talk about our each individual needs and how we can collaborate together best, then that's going to change the workforce so we can really change the stigma going forward.
- Elizabeth Knox: And I think it's exciting to see how law school are adapting to mental health issues and really being proactive about it. They want you to reach out before it becomes a crisis, so do that. Pay attention to what's going on with your classmates, with yourself. Just be there. Be open and ready to jump in and help. And be willing to get help when you need it. And I think that's something we all forget. We get wrapped up into our own lives and lose sight of things. But there are programs in place ready to go.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, well, with that we are out of time. Thanks, Elizabeth, for coming on and talking to us about this very important issue. And we look forward to talking more about it in the future!
- Elizabeth Knox: Okay.
- Lee Burgess: 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!

RESOURCES:

[Elizabeth Knox, Access the Dream](#)

[Law School Toolbox blog: You Forgot to Request Exam Accommodations. Time to Panic?](#)

[Law School Toolbox blog: To Ask or Not to Ask: Summer Job Accommodations](#)

[Law School Toolbox blog: Why It's Important to Ask for Disability Accommodations Early](#)

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[Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast Episode 60: Applying for Accommodations on the Bar Exam \(w/Elizabeth Knox\)](#)

[Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast Episode 72: Seeking Accommodations in Law School and on the Bar Exam \(with Dr. Jared Maloff\)](#)