



- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about second semester, especially when things maybe didn't quite go your way first semester. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [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 always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.
- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we are talking about second semester, especially when things didn't go your way the first semester. So let's get to it.
- Alison Monahan: Well, Lee, we've talked about this before.
- Lee Burgess: A lot. Like every year, every year.
- Alison Monahan: Every year I feel like we do this episode.
- Lee Burgess: I know.
- Alison Monahan: But it really is a perennial issue, especially for 1Ls, because the reality is a lot of people are seeing grades that they've really never seen before. And that's hard.
- Lee Burgess: Yep, hard for me. I cried on the floor of my aunt's house. I did. Not my finest moment, but it happens. It's a long time ago now.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. And hey, look at you now.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: So I think that is actually our first point. If this happens to you, and you do find yourself crying over a grade or wanting to cry, do not despair.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: If your first semester grades aren't what you wanted or even maybe what you expected, all is not lost. This happens to a lot of people. I mean, look at Lee.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. And I think there are a couple of things that you also need to understand, and this may be different from how your grades were released in undergrad. Some schools trickle them out.



- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah. It's such torture.
- Lee Burgess: It's such torture. So for me, my most upsetting grade was the first one that came out.
- Alison Monahan: Fun times!
- Lee Burgess: It was just fun times. And then it was another 10 days or something before I got another grade, and they actually steadily went up. So, the news got better, but I was already pretty shattered by it. So, I think one of the things that is hard is you kind of need to understand how grades are getting released and try and keep a tiny, tiny bit of perspective. Just because you have one grade, that doesn't mean that's the entirety of your semester. So, I think even making it through the grade release process can be its own challenge.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. I remember first semester, I think our final grade didn't come back until almost Martin Luther King Day.
- Lee Burgess: Oh yeah. It can really drag on. Sometimes you're going back to school and you don't even have all your grades, and everybody's talking about how they did, or you're trying to evaluate what you want to do differently, and you don't even really know how you did.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's pretty much torture.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, understanding how things are going to get released and then trying to keep an itty bitty bit of perspective that you don't have all the information just because the first grade comes out. And it can happen the opposite. You can rock the first grade and then reality can set in later.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think most people have at least some grade they were surprised by. I mean, I didn't, first semester. Well, no, that was a different problem because I did so well that there was so much pressure that then I had a nervous breakdown. But that's a different [podcast](#). I think we've already talked about that.
- Lee Burgess: We were both crying. They were just for different reasons.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. No, you could be pleasantly surprised, in which case you probably don't need to listen to this particular podcast.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. You can just press the button and move on to the next one.
- Alison Monahan: You can go find the one where Alison has a nervous breakdown over having good grades first semester.



- Lee Burgess: You're a complicated woman.
- Alison Monahan: I know, right? Hey, it got me into therapy.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. It was a good thing. So, I think the hardest thing to do when you get these grades is to really move past the hurt and frustration and just get real about what happened. So, you've got to sit down and evaluate.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. And I think, too, people sometimes take these really personally, and it's hard not to do that. But trust me, I got bad grades at other times. It was just first semester I did well. But yeah, it's easy to think your life is over, or you're stupid, or whatever. And these are just grades. You're graded on a curve. It just means that someone did slightly better or your professor was in a little bit better mood when they graded this other exam than they were when they graded yours, unfortunately. Even when you look at entering the California bar, if you're close enough to passing, they'll reread your essay answers. And it's actually fascinating to see the variance of scores that people get on those.
- Lee Burgess: Fascinating / disturbing / concerning.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. It's frankly concerning about the validity of their grading process. The other day I literally saw – just to give people context here – 50 is really bad, a 65 is passing, and an 80 is pretty much unheard of. I saw a 15-point swing. And that sort of thing could happen, too, if you asked this professor to regrade all these exams, you might end up with the A- instead of the B+.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's really hard. So, some of this you just have to appreciate is the game that we're playing.
- Alison Monahan: Things happen.
- Lee Burgess: Things happen.
- Alison Monahan: However, if you're seeing a trend...
- Lee Burgess: Yep, if you're seeing a trend. And I think this is another good point that we should mention. One of [our earliest podcasts, which we did on the mindset...](#)
- Alison Monahan: I think the earliest.
- Lee Burgess: The earliest, one of the first, which was on mindset and the idea of a growth mindset. And I think that grades are one of the first times you can really implement this in law school.
- Alison Monahan: It is your opportunity to practice a growth mindset.



- Lee Burgess: It is. It will not be your last failure. Not that you failed, but it will not be your last...
- Alison Monahan: Disappointment.
- Lee Burgess: Disappointment. And what you do with that disappointment is really the key to growing as a person and being successful. So, really being able to take this feedback and say, "That is disappointing. I'm going to focus on what I'm going to do differently", versus, "I'm stupid. I can't do this."
- Alison Monahan: Right. And really looking at what caused this problem. If it's one negative grade, then that's a different problem than if you're consistently doing poorly across the board. So you've got to take a step back and really look seriously at your entire first semester. Look at your study habits. Were you studying enough, basically?
- Lee Burgess: Right. And were you studying the right way?
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Did you have good intentions and then you fell behind? I think a lot of people have life stuff come up. Is that something that you can resolve? Is it something that's going to continue? What are you going to do with that? Do you need to take time off? That's something to think about.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. We hear a lot about students who've had health problems and are dealing with ongoing health struggles. I had a parent who had major surgery, I think it was two days before my first final in law school. That wasn't ideal from a law school perspective. I'm glad it all went well, but that was super stressful. I was not able to focus as much as I had wanted. That wasn't my fault, but you know what? I didn't get to opt out of my grades. I still had to study and do my best. I think you also have to look at whether or not you had interactions with your professors. Did you get feedback? Did you do practice? Did you go to office hours? Were they helpful? Did you ask questions? You really have to start looking at what you did. Did your outlines and study aids even help?
- Alison Monahan: If you even did them?
- Lee Burgess: If you did them. Did you just take somebody else's outlines and put your name on the top?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And then be like, "Oh. Well, that didn't help me that much. I couldn't find anything." It sounds like we're kind of making fun of you, but we're not.
- Lee Burgess: No, we're not making fun of you, because this stuff.
- Alison Monahan: These are just things we see.



Lee Burgess: Yeah. And these are even some of the mistakes we tried to make.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Lee Burgess: There were, definitely. I thought at first I could just put my name on someone else's outline, and that does not work.

Alison Monahan: No.

Lee Burgess: At least for me, because you have to make that material your own. So, you have to kind of go through the entirety of the process. You need to look at your time management. Did you have a good study schedule? We talk a lot about blocking out time for deep work. Did you do deep work?

Alison Monahan: Did you do it more than two weeks before the end of the semester?

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. Did you do it throughout the semester? Did you get sleep? We also talk to students about their study schedule and we find out they're trying to sleep five to six hours or less a night. As the mom of two small children, I can tell you your brain does not function at capacity when you only sleep five to six hours a night, as I have for probably the last six years I've been a parent.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I had major sleep problems during the first semester exams, just because I couldn't stop thinking. And so, I was sleeping probably four hours a night and I literally went crazy. And after that I had a prescription for Ambien that I used during exams.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Sometimes things happen in the exam room. I was recently talking to a student who had a full-on panic attack in the middle of one of her exams and wasn't able to function for 30 minutes.

Alison Monahan: Oh wow.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And you can't... How do you even finish an exam?

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You're not coming back from that.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: Or computer problems.

Lee Burgess: Oh, yeah. I had those in law school, too.

Alison Monahan: I think everybody did. I think you can be like, "Well, I had a computer issue and that's why this grade was maybe a little bit less great than it could have been."



But you've also got to take a step back. "Well, why did I have that issue? Do I have an old computer, or did I not set up the software?"

Lee Burgess: Did not test the software.

Alison Monahan: Not test it, yeah. Sometimes things just happen, but sometimes they're variables you can control going forward, to try to prevent that from happening again.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Another thing that we see come up more and more are issues of accommodations. So these could be accommodations for learning differences, for anxiety. Anxiety is one that a lot of people think that they can't get accommodations for, but you actually can often, especially if you are being treated by a doctor or a psychiatrist, maybe you're taking meds for anxiety. Not to encourage people to take meds, but if it has gotten to the level that a doctor thinks that medication is necessary, that's often times a level where the school will acknowledge that. And I think the other thing to think about with accommodations is to remember you're not just fighting for extended time. Sometimes you are getting a separate room. There are all sorts of different accommodations that you and your doctor can ask for that can be big game changers. So if you didn't ask for them first semester, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't ask for them going forward, because they can be the difference maker.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. You're just trying to basically put yourself on that level playing field. And if it requires you being in a private room because otherwise you're going to have an anxiety attack – well, that's probably a fair ask.

Lee Burgess: Right. And looking forward to the bar exam, if you did not get accommodations in law school, it is harder to get them for the bar.

Alison Monahan: Much harder.

Lee Burgess: So, if you think that this is something you may need to get over the bar hump, go ahead and work with your law school now.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. They're going to be much more accommodating – no pun intended – than the bar examiners will be.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, absolutely. The other thing you want to think about when you evaluate all these different things is maybe even you can sit down with a journal or a scratch paper and start to make a list of what worked and what didn't work. I think starting to parse out what you liked and what you didn't like. And were you happy? Were you miserable? Were you super-stressed all the time? Did you give up exercise? Did you give up seeing any friends? I definitely know people



who went into a hole when they were in law school, and that's not a healthy place to be. So, I think doing kind of an evaluation of all these things is a great place to start. And if you feel like you are struggling to do this process, we have actually come up with an [online course](#) that will walk you through it and give you some feedback from our tutors to help you do this evaluation. So you can take a pass at it, but if you're still running into a wall, we can help. Or you can go to academic support, or even the Dean's office at your school, if you have some structural issues with things that might be happening around classes or accommodations, or you're concerned. These are the people at your school that are there to help you.

Alison Monahan: Right. And you may be even taking classes with the same professors. So, go and talk to them.

Lee Burgess: Right. Alright, the next thing you also want to do is to look at your exams, if you can. And this really does differ professor from professor, but I would say, what, 80% of professors will give you your exams back?

Alison Monahan: It depends. Some schools, it's totally normal. Some schools don't do it at all. Find out what your school does or your professors do. Sometimes they'll let you come to their office and look at your exam and go over it with them, but they won't let you take it, things like that. This is something nobody wants to do, but it's probably the single most valuable thing if you can make yourself go through the process.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, because it is not fun. It's not fun. It is really confronting all of your worst fears.

Alison Monahan: Right, like, "I really did miss that, didn't I?" Typically your professor is going to give you, at a minimum, a sample answer. But I think you want to see what you did under exam conditions. And often times people are kind of surprised, like, "Oh, wow. I thought I really was much more coherent than that."

Lee Burgess: That's true. That's very true. And sometimes professors say wacky things. I didn't really have law professors say wacky things, but I was just telling this story to my husband the other day about my college calculus professor. So, I ended up taking a more advanced level of calculus than I should have, and I went to office hours. And he was this older German gentleman who periodically would speak German in class. And then I had a friend who spoke German who would then talk to him in German and say, "Please stop speaking German because nobody knows what you're talking about." And so, I went and you can imagine 18-year-old Lee clutching my exam that I had not done that well on. And I walk in and I'm very nervous, and I'm a perfectionist, and I don't like to think about failure. So he goes... And I won't do a German accent because it's really awful. But he was basically like, "Well, you just made mistakes." He goes,



"I don't make mistakes, but some people do. And you did make mistakes." I remember just being completely horrified by that whole interaction and skulked out of the office. But it was fine. I survived. I didn't take any more calculus after that, but I survived. I think sometimes you get so worried about these interactions, that they're going to be scarring or that you're not going to live through them, and you always live through them. Sometimes you'll have a good story even if it doesn't go well. But sometimes the professors have amazing insights that can really help alter your direction in law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I had a friend who did not so well in one of our first year classes and went to talk to the professor about it, and the professor basically said to him, "Hey, you were really great in class. I really enjoyed having you as a student. I was surprised by your exam grade, I don't know what happened. But if you ever want me to write a recommendation, I would be happy to do that, because I don't judge you based on this exam."

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. It's a snapshot in time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's one exam.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's a really good point. And that's an interesting point, that even if you did pretty well – maybe not if you got the high score in the class – but still, even if you did pretty well, it can be good to connect with those professors for things like letters of recommendation.

Alison Monahan: Well, you want them to have something to say other than, "Lee got an A in my class." It's like, we can look at the transcript and see that; that's not adding anything. And if you did do well, they might want you to be a TA or something. But again, you probably want to go build that relationship.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think one of the things that's weird about exams is when you... I don't know if you felt this way, but when looking at past exams, I almost never could recognize it as my work, because I was kind of in this zone. I didn't really remember what I wrote.

Alison Monahan: I'll be honest, I'm not sure I ever looked at any of mine.

Lee Burgess: Again, model student. The one I remember the most was in my Constitutional Law class. One of my answers was the model answer that they sent around, and the only reason I knew it was mine is it had my exam number on it. Because I was reading it and I was like, "Who wrote this?" And then I looked at my... I was like, "Oh, huh, that's weird." It didn't even sound like me, because you're so amped up on all this language.

Alison Monahan: I would have no idea what I would be writing most of the time.





- Lee Burgess: It's so strange. But that's why you have to go back and revisit it, because you won't even remember the good stuff.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And think about your whole process too. If you do look at your answer and you feel like it's maybe a little incoherent or not as well organized, or you missed issues or you talked about things that were minor issues for too long and didn't talk about more important things, this is really the time to take a step back and look at your pre-writing outline and how are you reading the question? How are you identifying the facts? How are you making sense of those? How are you learning the law so that you can actually apply that? These are the bigger picture questions to understand, like, "Oh, wow, that's not how I thought I would have been writing."
- Lee Burgess: Right. No, that's a really good point. And so, after you've done all this evaluation, after you've maybe gone to your professors and you've maybe talked to the school, then it's time to develop the plan. It's always my favorite part.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. Everyone loves planning.
- Lee Burgess: Everybody likes planning.
- Alison Monahan: When your day planner is all clean...
- Lee Burgess: It's a new year, it's a new decade.
- Alison Monahan: So, you can just drop that deep work right in and make that a recurring event every Saturday afternoon, like, "Oh, I'm totally going to do this."
- Lee Burgess: I just put my new workout plan, I blocked that time on my calendar. It's all ready in January, waiting for me.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, well, I read recently you should actually start in December, but...
- Lee Burgess: Well, I tried to start in December.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: But I only met 50% of my goals in December, because my schedule is so nuts that I end up canceling half of them.
- Alison Monahan: Well, that's the reality versus the new plan part. But hey, 50%'s better than nothing.



Lee Burgess: That's what I said. Any workout is better than no workout. But no, I did try to start the plan in December. It just didn't...

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Right now you're in the shiny part where it's early January, you're laying out your life plan for the new semester, everything's going to go great. So, you've got to think about what you need.

Lee Burgess: So, you've got to think about what you need and you've got to go get the help. And I think that this is one of the things that often times students delay too long on, because it can take time to line up the help.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Lee Burgess: If you need a therapist, if you need to go meet with your doctor, if you need to be evaluated for accommodations, if you need to hire a tutor like our team, if you need a life coach, if you need to meet with your academic support office, if you need to find people in your life to have dinner with, to talk about what's going on, to create a new support system. All of that takes time. And I think what happens in January is often times you come back kind of blurry-eyed from the holiday breaks, and it's all of a sudden mid-January.

Alison Monahan: Right. And then you've got usually a holiday for Martin Luther King Day, so then you're like, "Wow, it's literally mid-January."

Lee Burgess: Right. We do a retreat every January, and we were looking at the calendar and I think it was like, "We'd like to do this in early January." And I think it's the mid part of January was the first day that we could lock down, because January just flies by.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: And it can take a while to get appointments with these people.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, you're not the only person who's looking for help in January. It is the season for self-care and self-betterment.

Alison Monahan: You're not the only one showing up at the gym.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. That's why you have to reach out as soon as possible. So if you're listening to this and you're thinking, "I should get a therapist" or, "I should explore the therapy provided by my school", just call today. Call today.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, or even just show up there. I literally remember showing up in their office and being like, "I think I need to talk to someone." And they took one look at me and were like, "Yeah, we're going to try to squeeze you in. You don't look so great."

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So, how do you think you can track how you're doing? Because really, more than making plans is tracking if you're living up to your plan.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you can go back to your SMART goals that I'm sure we've talked about. You can Google things that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. So, we mentioned earlier plopping that deep work on your calendar. You should do that. You should go ahead and block out, I would say minimum three and preferably six, at least, hours a week, every single week, to really sit down and do that deep work. So, how do you make that a SMART goal? Well, you commit to it and you're like, "Okay, I'm going to do two three-hour sessions each week." Okay, you can measure that. You can put it on your calendar. You can mark off whether you did it or not. That's going to get you a lot further than saying, "I'm going to spend more time on my outlines." What does that mean? Like, one minute more? A week more? Every day, every week? What are you even talking about? You have to make it something you understand.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I also am a big fan of the incremental goal, because it can be hard to... Let's take my failure to exercise example.

Alison Monahan: I think you just mean your slight under-performance.

Lee Burgess: Okay, my under-performance. But it was clear to me that this goal of doing this twice a week – which is not going to happen in December, because December is super crazy – but at least I said, "Okay, then I'll shift my goal and I will do one day a week in December, and then find two days a week in January." And I think that sometimes we'll say, "There's no way I can find six hours a week to do deep work."

Alison Monahan: Right, so then start with three.

Lee Burgess: Then start with three. And then the next week, or two weeks later, start with four. And then the next couple of weeks later, start with five. I think that sometimes, especially with these high functioning people, which most law students are, it's like, "Go big, go home."

Alison Monahan: Right. "I'm going to do three hours a day of deep work." It's like, you're not going to do that.

Lee Burgess: No. And this is why New Year's resolutions constantly fail, because we set these unattainable goals for ourselves and then we can never do them.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. No, it does help to have something you can count. I realized at some point I'd bought a 10-pack of yoga classes on sale last January. And as of about a month ago, I had not used a single one of them because I totally forgot that I'd purchased them at this great price. And I realized, "This is ridiculous. I already own these, I need to use them." And now, because I had that in my mind and I knew it was 10, I've actually used nine out of the 10.

Lee Burgess: Wow, look at you.

Alison Monahan: So, I'm feeling pretty good about that.

Lee Burgess: That is good.

Alison Monahan: I feel like I can use the last one in the next few days, and that will have been a good purchase.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, it is just good to track what you're doing, and also look at your goal setting. And I think the other thing is, when things aren't working, just don't throw the whole plan out the window.

Alison Monahan: Right. That's the classic diet thing: "Oh, I had a cookie, so now I'm just going to give up." It's like, you could actually just start now, with going back and eating what you think you should be eating. I'm not saying you should be dieting. I think that's probably not a great idea anyway. But if you want to, you do you. Yeah, I think, too, we're in this modern era of the Internet – are there apps that can help you with this?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, we just got an email about one of the apps.

Alison Monahan: We did, yes.

Lee Burgess: Do you remember what that was called?

Alison Monahan: No, but I'll look it up while you talk.

Lee Burgess: Okay, great. So, we are big fans of tracking time, maybe even tracking your habits, even shutting off the Internet, which can be beautiful. And so you can use some of these apps to really help change your habits. I think the first one that I think can be really powerful is tracking your time, because one of the things I think law students will often say – and we've all fallen into this trap – is, "I don't have time to do X, Y, and Z." If you really don't have time, then you need to track your time and find out where all your time is going, because I think you might be surprised sometimes to find where your time is going. And so, there are plenty of these online that you can use – [Harvest](#), there are tons of them.



You can Google, many of them are free. But just start tracking your time. Hey, if you're going to practice law, you might have to learn how to do it anyway.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're going to do it in six-minute increments, so you might as well get used to it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But I think that there's something about turning on the clock and saying, "Okay, I'm going to sit here for 90 minutes, and maybe I'm going to shut off my Internet, or I'm going to block all social media sites, or I'm going to put my phone in my purse."

Alison Monahan: In airplane mode.

Lee Burgess: In airplane mode, because literally the constant pinging is just...

Alison Monahan: It's very distracting.

Lee Burgess: It's very distracting. And every time you get interrupted, you can't go back and finish what you do. We have been working on this and seeing curriculum projects for a long time. It was funny, because we use [Slack](#) in our office and at one point I just had to shut it off, because I was like, "You guys, I'm never going to finish my work", because every time I have to go back...

Alison Monahan: I remember at one point I think you texted me to be like, "You haven't been on Slack all day. Are you alive?"

Lee Burgess: I know. I did it because I was kind of worried, because I usually talk to you all day.

Alison Monahan: I was actually doing things, and I think I had a massage or something. I just wasn't on the Internet for six hours.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and that kind of freaked me out, I'll be honest. Because usually if you're not on the Internet for six hours, you tell me like, "I'm going skiing for the day", and I don't expect you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it was just funny. I was like, "Wow, it's 3:00 PM and Lee already thinks I'm dead because I haven't Slacked her."

Lee Burgess: We have a healthy codependency. I just need to know that you're okay.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Oh, so I found this app, it's called [Habitica](#). Habit with ICA. The person who sent it to us says, "If you're not familiar, it's a gamified habit building to-do list that gives video game-style rewards for completing tasks or strengthening a



new habit. It also allows you to join teams of other users, and by failing to do your tasks, you harm yourself and your teammates' score."

Lee Burgess: That's a little intense.

Alison Monahan: So, you and your study group could basically be accountability partners by not wanting to bring your score down.

Lee Burgess: Well, if anyone tries this, you should totally send us an email and let us know how it goes.

Alison Monahan: It sounds very stressful to me, but I can see it being effective for certain people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So this is the thing – the Internet's beautiful in the way that it can try and solve your problems, and create new problems. But if you need an app or a way to hold yourself accountable, there are ways to do that. I know another one – you can actually put in money, and either it releases it to go do something you want or it gives it to something you don't want to do.

Alison Monahan: Or an organization you don't want to support. I can see that being motivating.

Lee Burgess: That one could be motivating. In these heightened political times, I'm pretty sure you can find something that would make your blood boil, no matter what side of the spectrum you're on.

Alison Monahan: "I will do that report, because I will not let these people have my money."

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Alright, so other than apps, you may want to start looking at supplements, especially if you did not use them the semester before. And then think about how you're using the supplements. Please don't buy all of them. Find one or two that makes sense to you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think sometimes people think, partly because their professors sometimes tell them this, they're like, "Oh, you don't need supplements. You should just figure it all out on your own." And the reality is, I think you should do your reading and that kind of thing. But I also think you'd probably want to consult an expert source to give you that big picture and all the details. And if you find that you didn't really comprehend the material, something like an [E&E](#) can be very effective, because it forces you to really engage with that material and test yourself. If you didn't do multiple choice practice and you had multiple choice exams, there're books and things that you can get that have that practice in them. So, whatever piece of it it was that fell apart for you, that's a place to look for a little bit of extra attention. And if you're, quote, "bad at multiple choice" – well, I'm sorry, you have to take the bar exam.



- Lee Burgess: You just have to figure it out.
- Alison Monahan: I don't want to be having that same conversation with you in several years when you fail the bar because your MBE score was terrible. This is an opportunity really to get those skills, so that you don't have to deal with this on the bar.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And if you really want to do a deep dive into why you need to shut off your phone and Internet, a book that is good on this is [Digital Minimalism](#) by Cal Newport.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, Cal, our favorite. Yes, he has some good books. I admit I started Digital Minimalism, and I think I got distracted by Instagram or something, but...
- Lee Burgess: So, you failed.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, basically I put it in a drawer next to my bed whenever I was reading it, and I don't read it anymore. But hey, I'm going to go back and read it. I'm sure it's great.
- Lee Burgess: I'm sure it is. And even the last just couple of weeks, because the holidays are an overwhelming time, I've been reading at night real books, not on my phone, and trying to get off my computer and social media, and even TV, and all that stuff earlier. And it is amazing how different your brain feels when you are just released from that stuff. So, really looking at your own personal habits can be pretty freeing too.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and this just goes back to having a little bit of self-discipline. We all want to sit and do something mindless, but that might not be the best thing for your sleep and that kind of thing.
- Lee Burgess: Alright, so what if things went really, really, really, really badly and you're worried that you shouldn't be in law school?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think it's a question worth asking yourself. And I don't think you even necessarily had to do that terribly. I think if you did what you feel is subpar, even okay, but you were miserable. I don't think people should be afraid of examining that question. I'm not saying they should drop out, but I think you should at least consider it, because then at the end of that analysis you basically are either like, "Yes, I'm going to recommit to doing this and then I'm going to take the steps I need to get the help I need to do better." Or, you decide this isn't for you and you become Carly Fiorina, or whatever her name is, and you go lead HP because you dropped out of law school after a semester.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think it's a fair question to ask, and if nothing else, if it leaves you in law school, you will feel better about being there.



- Alison Monahan: Well, because you don't want to go through thinking, "Oh well, maybe I should just drop out", and not really examining that. And then you don't really commit, and then you probably don't do much better. And then you get to the end of your first year and you're like, "Well, maybe I should've dropped out."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. You're spending a lot of money to be there, so you should want to be there.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, I don't think it's a question to be afraid of. I think if you're feeling like maybe you should, then find somebody to talk to about that.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, to kind of wrap it up, I think it's important to remember that you can learn these skills needed in law school, and you should do it now before you realize that you failed the bar and then you have to go back and learn the skills you should have learned in law school. So, you need to do deliberate practice, get feedback on that practice, and learn these core subjects, because they are going to haunt you later if you don't do the work now.
- Alison Monahan: That is true, it's absolutely the case. Nobody's going to care if you're like, "Well, I always hated contracts." It's like, "I'm sorry. Contracts is one of those topics that you need to know to pass the bar exam. You're going to have to learn it, so you may as well."
- Lee Burgess: It's heavily tested.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, very heavily tested. Going to have to learn it. May as well do it now.
- Lee Burgess: Yep. Alright, any other thoughts before we wrap it up?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I guess on that one point, I would say if you have done really, really poorly in a particular first-year class, you probably want to consider taking an advanced class.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, that's a very interesting point.
- Alison Monahan: Later on. If you really feel like, "I totally bombed X, Y, or Z", that is not an excuse to never take a class in it again. It's kind of the opposite.
- Lee Burgess: That's true, because these subjects do not go away.
- Alison Monahan: They don't go away. You have to understand them.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a very good point. Alright, with that, we are out of time. If you want help figuring out what happened first semester, you can check out our [Reboot program](#) or our [tutoring options](#), because we're here to help. If you enjoyed this





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### **RESOURCES:**

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[Tutoring for Law School Success](#)

[Harvest](#)

[Slack](#)

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[Examples & Explanations \(E&E\) series](#)

[Digital Minimalism, by Cal Newport](#)

[Podcast Episode 1: Mindset – The Key to Success in Law School?](#)

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