Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we are talking about learning through failure and mistakes. 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. Well, if you've listened to this podcast over the last few years, it probably won't be shocking to you that we like to read about education research and how we learn.

Lee Burgess: We're such geeks.

Alison Monahan: We are geeks.

Lee Burgess: We are geeks.

Alison Monahan: We're also fascinated with how we deal with failure, as evidenced by one of our very first podcasts being about... Actually, I think our first one – Mindset, Carol Dweck's book. And shockingly enough, we actually learn the most about learning when we read about the research around how children learn.

Lee Burgess: No, nobody is writing research about law students, really.

Alison Monahan: No, they're not. Because as adults, we can actually learn a lot from what's being done in the classroom with kids about better learning and retention. So Lee, recently you sent over an article that was circulated by your kid's preschool teacher.

Lee Burgess: Yep, because that's where I learned the most about learning, is in preschool, basically.

Alison Monahan: All of our tutors read the article and were like, "Wow, this is really fascinating. We should talk to our law students about this."

Lee Burgess: Exactly. And what was interesting about this that was different than a lot of the other research I read that's like, "Our kids should be playing more", is it was really focusing on how mistakes can lead to better learning outcomes, especially around topics like math. And I think when we've been doing a lot of our reading and research, I find that a lot of the math research aligns a little bit more with

the law education, just because of the difficulty. There's an emotional mental element to it. There can be a stigma around it. There's a lot of process-based…

Alison Monahan: It all basically goes back to logic as well.

Lee Burgess: Right, that too. And so, we have linked to this article in the show notes from NPR, but here is the gist of it. It's kind of interesting. I was rereading it this morning, preparing for this podcast and I was like, "Oh, there's such good stuff in here." Alright, so buckle up, guys. This is a super exciting one. So, the article talks about how we retain information, especially after we've made mistakes. So, why when I was reading this, I immediately wanted to send it to the team was because it starts with a similar scenario to this one in a children's classroom. But I changed it to the law school classroom, because it's totally on point. So, you can picture yourself in your law school classroom. Let's say the professor has asked a question and you are sure that you know the answer, so you shoot your hand up in the air and you get called on and you confidently answer the question, and then the prof tells you you're wrong, and then discusses the right answer.

Alison Monahan: That's exactly what happened to me in Civ Pro. It was my most humiliating day in law school. I still remember that feeling of the professor just blankly looking at me and saying, "Hm, I think we're going to take another answer on that." And I'm like, "What?" He's like, "No, there's nothing to work with here. That is just completely and totally off-base." But I ended up being a TA in that class.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. My most memorable mistake in a law school class was in Criminal Law. I was cold called on, but I was fumbling my way through the answer, and then I embarrassingly got told to please be quiet because I was just filling the air in the room, and I was mortified. I thought the teacher, who I really liked, hated me. Then when he nominated me for some committee or... I don't know, I got the thing that was like, "This professor submitted you for this." And I'm like, "Are you kidding me? Doesn't he think I'm a complete idiot?" I went and talked to him about it and he's like, "I literally have no idea what you're talking about, Lee. Like, no idea."

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, honestly to this day I can't really remember what this was even about.

Lee Burgess: Oh, I remember what mine was about.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I don't remember. I blocked out the topic, but I do remember the feeling. But what we now know after reading this article is that mistakes made with high confidence, where you're then immediately corrected is actually one of the most powerful ways to absorb something and retain it. So, all these horrible moments in class were actually really great learning opportunities.

Lee Burgess: I know. So, you might be saying, "Wait, my embarrassment and humiliation that I feel can lead to learning?" And it looks like the research is pointing to "Yes". One of the things I think we struggle with as Americans is that we are generally afraid of failure, and we do what we can to just avoid it at all costs. Even we'd rather be mediocre, I think, than fail. But it turns out that as we learn, we need to create opportunities for failure so we can challenge ourselves and engage the part of the brain that learns from mistakes. When you really sit back and think about it, you're like, "Oh well, of course learning from mistakes would create better learning, because from an evolutionary perspective, if I eat something and it makes me sick, I probably wouldn't eat it again."

Alison Monahan: Right. One of the things I thought was interesting in this article is they actually talk about the way that teachers are taught to teach. And so, one of these ideas was that you just show people the correct way to do something, and then that's how they learn it.

Lee Burgess: They call it just focusing on the process.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so then mistakes are considered bad because you're not following the right process. But what this article is pointing out is that's actually not really that effective of a way to teach. I remember when I was a TA in a different class in Architecture school, and we were actually doing math on the board, and I'm comfortable with math. I went to high school for science and math people. I'm feeling pretty confident. So I'm working out this relatively complicated math problem on the board about energy coming into the building and going out of the building or whatever it was, and we had to figure out our insulation. And I remember looking up and the professor came in at that exact moment when he was supervising. He comes in, and I look up and at that exact moment I realize I've just made a mistake on the board.

Lee Burgess: In front of everybody.

Alison Monahan: In front of everyone, and it was several lines ago. And there was that moment of, "Hm, okay." I'm like, "What do I do?" So, I take a step back and I'm like, "Alright, class, we're going to engage in an exercise."

Lee Burgess: Teachable moment.

Alison Monahan: Teachable moment. Like, "Does anyone notice that maybe this answer is not correct?" And finally they were looking at it and one person said, "Yeah, actually that's not right." I'm like, "How do you know? Where's the mistake?" And they pointed out the mistake. And yeah, I talked to the professor afterwards. He was like, "Yeah, I was a little concerned for a few minutes there, but you definitely handled it well." And in the end, actually my people did better than anyone else, so I think it was a good learning strategy to actually make them, a) "How do I

know this is a mistake?" Because it seemed correct. And then, "Where in the process did I go wrong?" That's actually highly educational.

Lee Burgess: True. And I think this is hard for law students because typically, many of us are perfectionists, many of us are Type A and we don't want to either subject ourselves to any sort of failure or we take it very personally and don't look at it as part of the educational process. I, while raising children, have really found it interesting to watch how they learn, because children make mistakes all the time.

Alison Monahan: Well, of course, because they don't know how to do anything.

Lee Burgess: It's all trial and error. Right, they don't know how to do anything.

Alison Monahan: They can't even feed themselves.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. I always find it interesting. My son is very verbal, and I will correct his speech in a nice way, but if he's misusing a word, I'll often times just mention. I'll just say, "Actually it's this." And then he'll start to use the word, and then I watch him try and use it over and over again. And there's no, "I was using the incorrect word?" He's just like, "Oh, that's the right word?" He just rolls with it, and he typically retains that; that I corrected him, because he's also trying to practice it and implement it. And I often times look at my kids and I wonder if we all had such levity around mistake making, what an adult existence would be like. Because kids are always falling down, kids are always making mistakes. And I think this fear around failure is something that they really learn from adults, who are afraid of failing.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Yeah, it's even interesting… Part of the reason that I do things take ski lessons is because I think it's important to put yourself in a position where you are not good at something and you're going to fail, just as a practice. But even then, it's funny because of course I fall down. I don't love falling down, but also it doesn't really bother me that much, as long as I'm not injured. But some instructors really freak out about it. They come running over like, "Oh my God, are you okay?" I'm like, "I was going really slowly and doing some weird exercise you gave me and my skis crossed and I fell down. I'm fine." Like, "Are you okay?" It's fine. I'm learning to ski in a different way. I fell over, but it's not a big deal. I kind of expect that to happen.

Lee Burgess: And it's interesting – anytime you take some sort of parenting class or you read a book about toddlers, who when they fall down, there are many fall downs that don't create harm. So if it's a non-harm inducing fall down, the first thing they do is to look to the adult to wait for the reaction, because if they do not know how to react themselves, they learn reactions from other people. So you can

watch it once you know. You can see a kid goes boom!, they spin around, look at mom or caretaker.

Alison Monahan: Are they are freaking out?

Lee Burgess: Wait for the response. And they tell you your response is supposed to be like, "Oh, you went boom! Great job getting up." You know?

Alison Monahan: Moving on.

Lee Burgess: Or I had a friend who every time her kid would get hurt, her response was always like, "Oh, you got hurt. Well, the body is amazing. The body will heal itself", instead of like, "Oh my gosh, you're bleeding, you have a scrape", whatever. I think that it really opens up this idea to children are trying to learn what these – we call them "bonks" in our house – but what these little stumbles mean. And they're looking at the adults. And if we make a big deal out of them, then every single time they fall, they will freak out.

Alison Monahan: Right, it'll be this big deal. And you're like, "Actually, you're fine."

Lee Burgess: "Actually, you're fine. You hit your head, you start really crying, I totally get that. That hurt. But you fall on your booty, moving on. That happens all the time." And so, I think if you can just appreciate that some of our experiences around making mistakes is a learned reaction, then you can undo it and open yourself up for some of the learning that can come when you're willing to really create situations for failure.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, one of the things I always tried to remind myself about, and sometimes even my friends about, was I'd rather make a mistake in class than on the exam. If I actually did have some lack of clarity around this concept, I would rather find that out now instead of finding it out when I do poorly on the exam.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: It's sort of a "you can psych yourself up" type of thing, but it really does sort of work if you can say, "Okay, yes, I was wrong about that. Life goes on. Now I know."

Lee Burgess: Right, yeah. And I think with this example, we want to make sure that you understand that it doesn't mean that the only way that you can learn or open yourself up for making these mistakes is by volunteering in class, although you should do that and it would make your professors very happy. But there are other ways you can implement this idea, because what the research shows is

you really don't learn anything by doing wild guessing. And I thought this was an interesting point that they made.

Alison Monahan: True.

Lee Burgess: It was like, if I was just like, "What's the capital of X?" and you were like, "I don't know."

Alison Monahan: I'm like, "I don't know. Is this... Yeah, some city I've heard of that might be in that same state." I'm not really thinking about this.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. You're not. Then if I tell you the correct answer, you are not going to retain that.

Alison Monahan: I'll be like, "Oh, okay, great. It's Wyoming or Cheyenne or whatever."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, not Jackson Hole. I don't know. So, you have to come up with your best right answer, because what you're doing is you're trying to pull that information from your brain and then validate for your brain whether or not that was the right information. It is called memory reconsolidation, because you are summoning up prior knowledge when you're trying to answer a question. And that's different from just picking something wildly off the top of your head. And so, the research that they're doing with math students at a school in New York City is they've been giving them more quizzes. I think it's an interesting switch, because it used to be too much testing, too much evaluating, people who are convince they don't know how to do things. But what they're actually finding is by giving them more quizzes, as long as they are followed up by a review of students' specific errors – kind of like you were talking about what happened in your class – then the initial results show that it's actually helping performance because they're reviewing what went wrong. And the reviewing what went wrong or what went right is actually helping with the learning.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I would think that makes sense because if you're actually really trying to get to the right answer and you think you got the right answer, and then suddenly it's pointed out to you that you didn't, and you have to figure out where you went wrong, it does make sense that that's going to stick in your brain, because your brain is really trying to identify that.

Lee Burgess: Right. And it's an engagement. We talk a lot on this podcast and in our blogs and with our students about active learning, and wrestling with material is active learning.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I talked to someone the other day in law school, it was kind of funny. Of course I asked, "Did you do practice questions before you got your disappointing grades?" And they said, "Oh yeah, I did a lot." I'm like, "Well, did you have

sample answers?" "No, but I was pretty sure I was getting them right." It's like, "Well, I'm guessing that what we need to do is have you do things that we have answers to, and review those answers because clearly something in this process is not going correctly." But I just thought it was funny: "Oh, I did them." "Then did you look at the answer?" "Oh no, I didn't have the answers, but I was sure I was getting it right." I'm like, "Yeah, your grades don't reflect that."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, when you think about how to implement some of these lessons into your studying, I think the first thing you have to do is just be honest about this idea that law students don't like to be wrong or fail. If you struggle with this, you should read Carol Dweck's book and you should try and work on your growth mindset, because that's the other thing that this article talked about, was that students who had a growth mindset were able to take in this negative feedback about their performance and do something with it. So, for the cheap seats, if people have not heard us go on and on and on about Carol and her work, Alison, you want to give a summary of the growth mindset?

Alison Monahan: Well, the growth mindset is basically when you encounter some type of obstacle. Basically, you look at what happened and what resources you can draw upon to get better at this in the future. Whereas the fixed mindset would make you say basically, "I got this question wrong. I should probably drop out of law school because I'm going to be a terrible lawyer. I'm not smart enough to do this. There's no way I can ever learn this. I'm going to give up." In a nutshell.

Lee Burgess: In a nutshell. I think that this goes back to your point of learning how to ski. I'm starting to work on learning a new foreign language. I would not consider myself to be a great language speaker. I've never been great.

Alison Monahan: I'm very bad at languages, and I still learned Spanish eventually.

Lee Burgess: But it's interesting, because I don't like to do things that I'm bad at, just by my personality structure, and I am constantly having to coach myself through this idea of, "This makes me uncomfortable, but I'm going to do it anyway. This doesn't mean I'm not smart. It doesn't mean I can't do it. This just means that I'm going to have to work a little harder and I'm going to have to keep marching on." And I think that it's very easy to get complacent and not do hard things. And I think even in law school, let's say you really understand torts, but then you get to real property and future interests make your head spin. Coming at that with a growth mindset is the way that you can actually learn that stuff or you just fold, and then you get a C in Real Property.

Alison Monahan: And then you struggle on the bar. So, don't do that.

Lee Burgess: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Go ahead and make yourself a chart right now. Sit down for a few hours. You can use that chart for years, trust me.

Lee Burgess: Yep, yep. We still have our charts.

Alison Monahan: I still have the one I made, the one page future interest, because the point is, it's not like that's easy material for anyone.

Lee Burgess: No, it's hard for everybody.

Alison Monahan: And it's just a question of, are you going to spend the time and energy that's required to really try to dig into this and understand it and put it together in a way that makes sense to you? Which is absolutely doable. Or, are you just going to dial it in and do a few things and then move on with your life and be like, "Oh, I guess I just suck at property. What can you do?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah, yeah. So, what we want you to start thinking about now that we've convinced you to work on a growth mindset, which is its own project. So, listen to our podcast.

Alison Monahan: It's an ongoing process.

Lee Burgess: It's an ongoing process. We want you to think about how you can engage in testing yourself and encouraging yourself to make mistakes. You could do this a lot of different ways. You could give yourself quizzes – I think that this could be very effective. You could write an outline and create a quiz for yourself. I bet you would never forget the material if you created your own quiz.

Alison Monahan: That's true.

Lee Burgess: You could do hypos. You can test yourself, test your memory. You can drill. But you need to do something to recall this information. And like the study said, really give yourself a chance to pull this information out of your brain. Because I think what happens a lot in law school is we get so comfortable with our little outlines, we get so cozy with them, we're like, "Oh well, I don't need to know this material because I can reference it." But your brain isn't really holding onto any information if it's on the paper. You have to really try and stick it in your brain.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's kind of like you got it on the paper, so now you can forget about it.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: I find that with my to-do list.

Lee Burgess: Oh, yes.

Alison Monahan: Once it's on my Trello board, I literally look at that a day later and be like, "Wow, I had no recollection of any of these things", because that's the whole point. I got them out of my head.

Lee Burgess: Or calendaring, now that we have our electronic calendars. I think last night it was before we went to bed, my husband's like, "What's your day look tomorrow?" I was like, "I don't know."

Alison Monahan: I don't know. My calendar will tell me when I wake up. It'll tell me what to do.

Lee Burgess: It'll tell me what time I'm supposed to be places. I had to go find my phone and be like, "This is where I'm supposed to be at 9:00. I guess I need to do things so I could be somewhere at 9:00." It's really funny. I used to hold a lot of that information in my brain, but now since it lives on my phone, I don't.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. This is another reason I like the Examples & Explanation series a lot too, for first year students particularly, is that that really forces you to use the material. And again, what we're really ideally looking for is this high confidence that you're correct when you're not. So, if you answer these questions you're like, "Yep, I've totally got this", and then you're like, "Ooh."

Lee Burgess: Whoops!

Alison Monahan: "Actually, no, I don't." That is a very valuable moment.

Lee Burgess: It is. And I think this goes back to that… And we see this in our bar work because when you do stacks of multiple choice questions, and if you're doing multiple choice practice in law school it's the same thing – people will do 15 and be like, "Oh, I got seven wrong."

Alison Monahan: Got seven wrong, moving on. Or maybe they'll look at the ones they got wrong. But what we actually ask our students to do is when they take the question, we ask them, "How confident are you about this answer?" Because if you're 100% confident and you're wrong, I want you to figure out why.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, what went wrong there?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, why is this not correct?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think that even the knowledge of the law, the thing that can tell you about your understanding of the law by having high confidence in being wrong or having low confidence... If you have low confidence because you don't know

the law at all, that's a different type of studying than being highly confident and then…

Alison Monahan: Incorrect.

Lee Burgess: ...knowing the law but applying it to the facts incorrectly. And so that is why all of your studying, whether or not you're applying it to Examples & Explanations or a hypo from your professor, or a practice multiple choice or a CALI exercise – whatever it might be, you need to think about the fact that you got it wrong, but also why you got it wrong. And do that deep dive. Was it the facts? Did you get it wrong because you knew the law but you're not good yet at distinguishing legally significant facts?

Alison Monahan: Or sometimes people just literally mix people up in the fact pattern. Stuff like that happens a lot. You might think, "Oh well, I just mixed them up." But no, if that's something that keeps happening to you, you've got to figure out a way not to do that.

Lee Burgess: Right, then you've got to write down the names or you have to do...

Alison Monahan: Do a diagram.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know that you need to be more careful not to mix people up than the average person.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You also need to figure out, like I mentioned earlier, is this a knowledge of the law problem? Is it like, "I didn't memorize my four-prong test, or do I not understand what those four prongs mean?" These are all things that you really need to learn from. And I think that so often, people will say, "I did all the practice exams", but then my question is, "But did you get all the feedback? Either from yourself, from your study group, from your professor, from your TA, from a tutor. Who told you whether or not you did it right, and then what did you do with that?" Because then I'll be like, "Did you rewrite it?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the rewrite. Love the rewrite.

Lee Burgess: Love the rewrite. And then they'll be like, "No, I didn't have time." That's my favorite: "I didn't have time to rewrite it." It's like, but you did have time to do more busy work? If you have time to do busy work, you could have time to rewrite it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I love people that are like, "I didn't have time to make a flow chart." I'm like, "Hm, that's because it actually requires you to sit down and really

understand this, doesn't it?" Seemed easier just to take somebody else's outline and read over it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so, when you think about the advice that comes from this article, and I do hope that you'll click on the show notes and read the whole thing, because I think it is very interesting – I think it really lends itself to the rewrite process when it comes to writing, because it's saying it's not just about the process; it's about going back, figuring out what went wrong, and then figuring out how to do it the right way. You're teaching your brain the right outcome after a mistake, and I think that's very important.

Alison Monahan: Right. What's it like, anything that fires together, wires together or something? The more you do something wrong, the more your brain is laying that neural pathway. But then the more you correct that, you're actually laying down a different neural pathway that's going in the correct direction. And that's what we want you to do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, this stuff is not easy, but we just waste so much time studying ineffectively. It's amazing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because it feels more comfortable. It feels scary to possibly make mistakes and do these things. I mean, it's not pleasant. I remember when I took the first Torts test the day before the exam, which was way too late, and missed that wild animals were strict liability if you kept them as pets. I will never in my life forget that. I will be on my deathbed thinking, "Oh, God, that lion. Whatever that lion eats, you're going to be liable for it." I will literally never forget that. And before I took that test, the sample one, I didn't even know that. I mean, I knew it on some level maybe, but I totally missed it. I will never miss that again.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. The other thing I think you can think about, not just struggling with this material for yourself, but you can think about the examples in the classroom. If you have a study group, or even a group of friends that you sometimes study with, I think you could really do this stuff together. I will say, I remember when we were studying future interests, which I was very flummoxed by in the beginning, that we got in a study room and we would take turns trying to do the problems on the board. That is really how I learned that material, is walking through it, finding mistakes, doing it again. And so, you can create these teaching environments even in your study group, and I think that that can be very powerful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because ultimately who really cares if you're walking through some complicated future interest problem and you get to the end and you're like, "Oh wait, actually that's not the right of reverter. It's really the right of entry." And everyone's like, "Oh, right, that's the right of entry." Whatever. I'm making these up.

Lee Burgess: You are. The right of reentry, I think is what it is.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the reentry. I'm like, reverting, reentry. Anyway, point being, we would know this at some point if we needed to, but I think ultimately it doesn't really matter that much if you get it wrong to start with. That's the whole point of the process, is you're working together to get these right. So, just approaching it much more of a way of like a kid falling down, like, "Oh, no, it's not that. It's this." "Oh, good to know. Alright, we're circling in on what's correct."

Lee Burgess: Right. And just letting those mistakes go and realize that the struggle is real. But the struggle's the magic part.

Alison Monahan: Well, and also every time you get a mistake, you're seeing what's outside of that box, because these are really just definitions, basically. It's kind of like your son with a word, like, "Oh, that word doesn't mean what I thought it meant. Okay. I wonder what it does mean. Let me test that a little bit. Does it mean this? Does it mean that? Oh, how's that different than this?" You're looking to see exactly what's in that box.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And one of the problems we see with law students is just that they're hesitant to test themselves because they don't want to be wrong.

Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah. I love that one: "Oh, I can't do the question because I don't know the law well enough."

Lee Burgess: Right. And the problem is that the research is going to show when you dive in, from a neuroscience perspective, you've got to study and test that knowledge to be able to know it well enough. It's all part of the process.

Alison Monahan: Right. You can't know the law in some abstract way. I mean, you might be able to give this legal trivia: "The elements of X are A, B, C, and D." It's like, okay, great. You know that, sort of. That's step one in knowing.

Lee Burgess: And almost everyone in the room. I think this is one of the most powerful things somebody told me when I was a 1L. Everyone in the room will know the legal trivia, especially if it's an open book test. They're really going to know the legal trivia.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's going to be right in front of you.

Lee Burgess: Right. So then how are you going to differentiate yourself? It's through the heavy lifting of understanding how that law is applied to facts, being excellent at reading the fact patterns and doing that analysis, and this type of quizzing and pushing yourself to make mistakes is going to be one way that you can differentiate yourself.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Because to know it because it was on the paper in front of you is different than being able to use it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: If you've really worked with that material – you've pushed the contours of it – you might even have some interesting thoughts about it.

Lee Burgess: You could go to office hours.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you could go talk to your professor about it. That's really what differentiates those very top exams, is that you can tell the person has really worked with this material. They've really thought about it. A solid test is basically going to get that out on the paper in one way or another.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. If you can get out of your own way and allow yourself to wrestle with this stuff, it's fascinating. The law is fascinating. I mean, not every single class. I hate civil procedure, but generally speaking. I know you love it. It's okay, we have a difference of opinion.

Alison Monahan: No, actually on the exam, what he ended up testing us on was this sort of really deep gray area that I'd identified at one point in my own struggle with the material. I sort of was getting into the question and I'm like, "Oh wait, I think that's that place where I wasn't sure what that answer was. Huh, okay." And then it turned out that actually my friend, who was also a TA, on his exam he had come out up a different answer. And we were both TAs in the class. We had done that work to realize that this was a really hard question.

Lee Burgess: But that's what makes the law fun.

Alison Monahan: It was entertaining. It was great.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, the law's fun if you get into it and really understand it. I think the law becomes really dry and painful when you're just reading outlines and trying to do legal trivia.

Alison Monahan: Well, and just trying to memorize stuff, but you're not really trying to learn. You're trying to be like, "Oh, I have to remember everything that's in here." A) that doesn't work, and b) that's not really the point.

Lee Burgess: No. Alright, well, we are wrapping up on time. Any final thoughts about learning?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think like you said, this is not easy and I think it's not something we're really trained to be that comfortable with, but you can also retrain yourself. I

personally think doing things that are hard, that you're interested in… Particularly for me, it tends to be physical stuff in one way or another, whether that's skiing or snowboarding or taking dance classes or even doing pottery or something, just to let yourself have that experience of, "Oh, I enjoy this even though I'm not perfect at it, and I'm learning something and that's actually fun."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's true. I think that this growth mindset muscle almost is something that can be exercised in a lot of different ways. And I think especially as we age and if we become parents or anything, it's easier to stop learning new things.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. But that's basically the way that your brain and body start decaying.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: So, don't do that.

Lee Burgess: Don't do that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Alright. Well, 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:

Article: Why Mistakes Matter in Creating a Path for Learning
Mindset, by Carol Dweck
Examples & Explanations (E&E) series
CALI Lessons
Podcast Episode 1: Mindset – The Key to Success in Law School?
Law School Toolbox blog: Ahead of the Curve: It's All in Your Head: Cultivating Success and Overcoming Setbacks with a Growth Mindset
Law School Toolbox blog: Active vs. Passive Learning in Law School