



- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about how to cope with the coronavirus and all the changes law schools are making in response to this. So, it's going to be quite a wild episode. 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](#). 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 would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.
- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast, where we are practicing responsible social distancing.
- Alison Monahan: Right, we are each in our separate offices.
- Lee Burgess: We are. Today, we are talking about how to handle the coronavirus and the changes law schools are making in response to that. So yeah, this is the weirdest podcast I think we've ever sat to record.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: But I'm happy to talk to you. This is actually the first time you and I have spoken to each other, other than over text in a week, and it's crazy.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, this has gotten pretty wild pretty quickly. Well, first off in case people are listening later, we are talking on Wednesday, March 18th. So, whatever happens after this, we don't know that yet.
- Lee Burgess: We don't know it yet.
- Alison Monahan: We don't know yet. I think we should just start by admitting we don't know exactly what's going to happen. We don't have any real special insider knowledge, but we do have some ideas for ways to cope with what's going on and we're happy to share them if you think they might be helpful.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think that we just want to also reach out to everybody who listens and know that we're all kind of mumbling and bumbling through this together and trying to stay as safe as we can. This is not a linear time; it's just a time to all take care of ourselves and to try and take care of each other from a safe distance, and someday life will become normal again.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. Now I remember, I think it was one week ago today, last Wednesday, not even a whole week because it was in the evening, three different things happened at once. I think Tom Hanks announced he had this, the NBA suddenly shut a game, and I think Trump was talking. And I reached out to friend, I'm like, "This is going to get wild." And I'm not sure we could realize even then, one week ago, how wild it was. So, there are definitely some major issues for law students, let's be realistic. I think education has been one of the things that's been, so far, most directly impacted, and people are dealing with a lot of stuff. So yeah, we've got some ideas.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So I think most law students are now in the midst of shifting to virtual learning experiences, which is not typically how law schools have been functioning. It's not how the Socratic curriculum is designed to be delivered. And so, this is going to be a clunky transition, and I think that the schools are feeling that. We also are likely going to see exam formats changing, everything's going to probably be a take-home, maybe it's going to be open book. Professors are also going to have to start pivoting and deciding how they're going to conduct exams, which is also going to be very different. And so, I think everybody has to be kind of open to learning about those shifts and thinking about how they're going to study for them. I think the logistics of everybody's daily life must be in flux. Mine is. We don't have any rhythm in my household. I have two small children, no rhythm. We are trying. Everybody has the color-coded schedules that I see on Instagram; that is not how my home is rolling right now.

Alison Monahan: Well, I think you just do what you can. Your kids are alive and they seem fed and...

Lee Burgess: You do what you can.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: They are, they are, yeah. I sent you a picture, they looked healthy. But I think the logistics of daily life are getting really complicated, and so I think that people need to put that into consideration. And then just the stress and uncertainty is unbelievable.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it's fair to say. I mean, this is a classic sort of black swan effect that...

Lee Burgess: I don't even know what else to say about that.

Alison Monahan: This is one of those things that just kind of came out of left field for most people, and people don't really know how to process it or even understand what's really happening or what might happen. And obviously that just



exacerbates the stress. I mean, this is a pretty crazy time. And then on top of that, you have legitimate health concerns, whether that's for yourself or other people. This could actually impact people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I know. I just got an email today from the pediatrician's office that we use, and one of the doctors has a high risk immediate family member. So, she just literally cannot go to work anymore. She's going to take virtual meetings. She's trying to take care of her community, but she's also scared for her own house. And I think that she's not alone in that situation.

Alison Monahan: No, I think that's absolutely correct. Well, it's a lot.

Lee Burgess: It's a lot. It's a lot. It's a lot for us. We'll just nervously laugh here this entire podcast because I feel there's not much else we can do. Alright, but since the only thing that is really something that cannot be pivoted around, I think is this idea of health. So before we dive into the logistics of school, I think the most important thing is that if you're not healthy, the other side of this is very different. So you need to make sure that you put your health as a priority. So if you are at high risk or you think that you're sick, you need to talk to your doctors. Hopefully the schools still have their health centers up and running, but a lot of doctors and doctor's offices are doing virtual communications. But if you're scared or you have questions, especially if you're staying in an apartment alone, which I think some people are – you need to reach out and talk to people, especially if you're in a high risk group or have someone in your household that could be in a high risk group.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. My health insurance has always had a virtual nurse line you can call. I think those types of things are really critical because it doesn't do anyone any good for you to sit around really freaking out about like, "Oh my gosh, I'm having a fever and I just coughed. Does this mean I have the coronavirus?" Call your doctor, call someone. And if you're not in this more high risk group, you might be a little bit cavalier about this, but I think you really have to think about other people who are and be really reasonable and responsible. I saw a tweet from someone who is a doctor saying, basically, at this point you should be acting as if you're infected and you're trying not to pass this on to other people. So, if you're young and healthy, which a lot of law students are, you might think, "Oh, this is such a hassle. I really just want to go out drinking with my friends." We all have to pull together here. That is not a responsible attitude, I'm sorry. You can unsubscribe from the podcast if you want to, but do not do that.

Lee Burgess: And I think it is hard. We're in the Bay Area, and the Bay Area has gone into shelter-in-place, one of the first cities to do it in the country. And it is hard when I hear about people in other parts of the country still out celebrating St. Patrick's Day or doing that kind of stuff, because my community is very, very scared and panicked. I actually really believe our leadership is doing everything to mitigate



this, and I'm actually very proud of what our community has been doing in San Francisco to try and take care of its people. But it's hard because there are those moments where you're like, "Why is everybody else acting like things are normal?" Things are not normal.

Alison Monahan: No, I will tell you how not normal they are. So, I actually had been trapped, literally trapped by the snow in my Tahoe cabin for several days, so I came back to San Francisco yesterday. I arrived at the Bay Bridge at 5:00 PM and there was zero traffic in either direction.

Lee Burgess: Oh my gosh, that is like end of days.

Alison Monahan: No, anyone who's lived or visited the Bay Area will know this does not happen. That actually freaks me out more than anything. And then when I pulled off the highway, to my actual house, I drove straight to the light, getting off the highway. That's normally a three to four wait light cycle. I was the only car there. It was creepy. It was really creepy.

Lee Burgess: We have a team member in Austin who's sharing pictures of the main boulevard in Austin that ends at the capital, that I think if you've been to Austin, you've walked on. I can't remember what it's called, but there were no people, no cars, no nothing. But also, I'm getting word that as of a couple of days ago, some places in the South and stuff like that, everybody's out to dinner and eating in restaurants. And it's hard. It's hard because I think that we all want to go back to normal life. I do, everybody does, but we do have to all be as responsible as we can. The only way to stop this from getting worse and worse and worse is to take early action.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. So, I think on the health stuff, your health comes first. It comes over law school. You have to do what you need to do to take care of yourself. If you are in a higher risk group, you might need extra accommodations. Talk to someone about this. But you have to do what you can to stay healthy, because like Lee said, that's the only thing that really ultimately matters in the end.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it really is. All this other stuff will get figured out at some point.

Alison Monahan: It's like, who cares what grade got?

Lee Burgess: We'll figure it out at some point.

Alison Monahan: If you have a bad grade on your transcript from this semester, people may ask you about it and you'll be like, "We were in the middle of the coronavirus." "Oh, right. Okay. Next question."

Lee Burgess: "Alright, next question."



Alison Monahan: Let's shift back to the school stuff because I know people are concerned about this, and for obvious reasons. I think there's a lot going on. So, we've gotten a couple of questions from people about virtual classes, "How can I stay engaged?" What do you think about that?

Lee Burgess: I think this is tricky. Because we work with people in the bar realm, we often talk about how recorded lectures and things like that are not a great way to learn. And now we're all kind of being forced to learn in this different environment, which I think is challenging for a lot of people. And we've been talking to our team, some of which who do teach virtually in classroom environments, about what has worked for them. But they're really seeing, and we've seen this ourselves too, that people really can only listen to these audio lectures and digest it in chunks, like five to 10 minutes. So, don't try and sit down and listen to a two-hour lecture without moving or engaging yourself in some way. The nice thing is if it's a recorded lecture, you can actually just make those breaks yourself and pause it and take notes, or do different things to engage or reflect in the material, or write down questions or things like that. And that's a luxury you can't do in the classroom. But just sitting and breaking it into chunks to help keep you focused, I think is pretty key.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think schools are doing different things. Some people are sending out lectures that you can just listen to, they're asynchronous. And I think there is the suggestion of whenever a topic is covered, maybe you just listen to it and then you pause it, you make some notes or questions, you start the next point. It makes sense. Other schools are doing more like live Zoom sessions and WebEx, things like that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I think there, you just have to kind of jump through whatever hoops they are requiring you to jump through to make sure that you get credit. One suggestion I've seen was you might want to handwrite your notes. So if you're watching on your laptop or you're looking at the lectures of the classroom, I guess, on your laptop, you don't want to be typing there too. So, maybe handwrite. Anything you can do to minimize these distractions, so probably in a quiet space. I'm currently actually sitting in my walk-in closet to record this. That sounds a little nuts, but actually something like that is probably going to be better than trying to sit at your kitchen table, where your dog is running around in the background or you have a child or whatever. Headphones can be helpful, just to kind of give you that focus. Anything you can do to kind of set this up where it's like, "Okay, now I'm going into my classroom space." So again, have all your stuff ready, have your handwriting notes ready to go, and then sort of have a process. What are you going to do with those notes? Do you take 30 minutes after the class



and wrap it up and type it? Whatever. I think you just want to have some process for this to try to be getting as much as you can out of this information.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. The other thing I think is, you're going to have to really combat notifications and interruptions.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. Great point.

Lee Burgess: I think we're going to talk about this from a mental health perspective, but I'll give you an example. We get all these alerts on our phones now from our local governments, right? This all started back in the wildfire seasons in California a couple of years ago. And I get them from the entire Bay area because I basically have subscribed to every county that my family lives in, which maybe is a little over the top, but I like to make sure I know what my parents are also seeing. But I got an alert and literally the alert said, "Later today there will be a new health advisory." That sent me into a panic. What is that health advisory? I don't know what that's going to be. Is there a new shelter-in-place coming? And I'm like, "I didn't need to see that. That was not..."

Alison Monahan: No, they could've just told you when the announcement was made.

Lee Burgess: I know, exactly. I'm personally really trying to figure out getting back to work and finding the balance in the situation my family is in. But I think that we're all kind of struggling. Right now, during this podcast recording, my phone is somewhere else because I know if I see something come through I will get distracted, I won't be able to focus on this. And so, how can you set up your electronic workspace to minimize those distractions – turn off email notifications, turn off news notifications. You are going to need the Wi-Fi to work, and I think that's kind of one of the challenges. So it's like, how can you manage distractions while still being connected to the Internet?

Alison Monahan: Right. And actually that's a great point, because people might not even realize that they actually have an option other than Wi-Fi probably. So, if you have a router in your house – this is really old school, but you can actually plug your computer into that. Kind of amazing technology, actually way more stable. So yeah, if you're suddenly having to do a bunch of video calls and your Internet is not really functioning, I would recommend that you try to get yourself, if possible, some cable and literally plug the machine in it. I'm actually looking at my MacBook Pro right now and I don't really think it has an ethernet plug anymore, but I think I have an adapter. So, you might be able to find that. Anyway, point being, you want to do what you can to kind of stabilize your office type of environment, understanding that most people are living in situations that are not necessarily conducive to this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think honestly the reality here is, you can go to these virtual classes and get what you can out of them, but you're going to have to teach yourself this material even more than normal. I think you just need to accept that and kind of make a plan for it.
- Lee Burgess: I think that's true, and use technology to help you with that. So, for instance, if your professors are holding virtual office hours, try to engage them with that. We have had our students reach out to our tutors, people who are already working with our tutors saying, "I think I need more time [or more meetings, or more consistency] because I'm going to have more questions. I'm finding myself with more questions." Not everybody can necessarily engage with us in that way, but it's just you need to open up your mind to all the ways to get questions answered. Maybe it is setting up a Zoom conference call with one or two people from your class and trying to talk through the lecture notes to see if you can together answer or clarify some questions. I think that we've got to get creative and collaborate as much as possible. I am so thankful that we already function in a virtual environment, so some of our business has been going on as usual. I had no idea that this would be such a great thing.
- Alison Monahan: It seems like a really good idea now, doesn't it?
- Lee Burgess: I know, now. I was like, "Wow, nine years ago we were so brilliant in creating this virtual business." But I think that if you are struggling or you have special learning differences that make it harder to adjust or harder to digest this material in this way, then you need to reach out and get the resources you can, because in the end it is your responsibility to still learn this material.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think if your professors are having virtual office hours, they'd probably be happy to talk to you. If not, they still have email, you can still email them questions.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: We have a post that we can link to about kind of the [logistics of setting up a virtual study group](#), also looking prescient after being published a year ago. But there are things you could do. We're on [Slack](#) all day long with our team and we're all talking, and I think that's actually really helpful. I saw today that apparently Google Chrome has a Netflix integration now, where you can watch Netflix movies with your friends and you can push the button and you'll have a chat room or something.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, I saw that, yeah.



- Alison Monahan: So, people are getting creative. But I think the virtual classes you have to show up...
- Lee Burgess: They stream Broadway musicals now.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, nice.
- Lee Burgess: Just a little mental health break
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. The classes, you have to show up to them in whatever way you can. I'm hopeful that schools are being flexible, if people have kids at home and things like that. I've seen some that kind of suggest they're not, but hopefully if you do have a situation where it's just not feasible for you to be fully engaged in this virtual class at a specific time, talk to someone. Don't just assume that they're going to say "No". Everybody understands that things are going on, they are not under your own control.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think that I'm seeing with the institutions that my friends work for and that we're interacting with that this is such uncharted territory that sometimes the people making decisions aren't even aware of all the situations that they're creating.
- Alison Monahan: Right, they're not thinking this. They're not thinking like, "Oh, maybe somebody has two kids at home and they can't be in a quiet room, fully engaged in a real time lecture." So then they think, "Oh, do we record that, so they can watch it later when the kids are asleep?" You might have to help them think through some of these issues.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that sometimes decisions are being made very quickly and they're not just going to be able to see the pros and cons of that. So, I think you've got to communicate with your schools because they are your providers, they're the ones who are trying to serve you. And some professors are really going to be stretched to utilize a lot of this technology. And so, it's not necessarily going to be streamlined, but you need to ask for what you need to get things done.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think to assume good faith. I mean, people are doing the best they can and no one really knows what's happening from day to day. So, if there's something that comes out and you think like, "Wow, that's so rude of them to do that" – that probably wasn't really the intent. So, just ask a clarifying question, point out politely that maybe this isn't going to work for people, but don't assume ill will. I think everyone's doing the best they can here.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, I think one of the other things that we're seeing happen to folks is that a lot of people are having to move. On-campus housing is shutting down. I know



you lived in on-campus housing in law school. Who knows whether you would have been able to stay.

Alison Monahan: We had an actual apartment, so probably... Also, where would we have gone? People had moved there, we lived there.

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: I mean, we're grownups. We don't have a place to go back to. I gave up that apartment.

Lee Burgess: It's really hard, I know. So, you might end up having to move, you might have roommates who have different situations than you do. They might all be working from home. So, you may have to sit down with your living situation and really kind of figure out what you need, and maybe even what you need to get through the rest of the school year. Now May sounds like decades from now, given how long every single day seems right now, but there isn't that much of the school year left. And so, it might just be coming up with a "now" solution, and then if this goes on for a longer period of time, what the future solution looks like.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I really feel like for most people it's day-to-day at this point. Let's just get through this day, and then tomorrow we'll get up and we'll figure out a new plan for a new scenario. So, hopefully people do have a place to live. I mean, it's not actually completely guaranteed.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: But I do think schools understand this, and so I think most of them, if they've decided that everyone has to leave campus, they understand that in some cases that may not be possible for a reason. So again, just go talk to people; don't just assume they're not going to do anything.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean this is a sub optimal situation. It is what it is, just do your best. This may not be your best situation ever, it may not be your best grades ever. That is okay, no one is going to hold that against you later.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: Well, speaking of that, let's talk about exams.

Lee Burgess: I know, I know. I was like, "Let's talk about the fact that probably people will get grades at some point."



- Alison Monahan: They are somehow going to get grades out of this. Although, actually I've heard some schools are going more like pass/fail. So, that could be a solution that you might propose to someone.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's very true. But there's still probably going to be an exam, even if it's pass/fail. I would be shocked if...
- Alison Monahan: Right, you're going to have to do something.
- Lee Burgess: You're going to have to show up to something.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, I'm going to guess that most of these exams are going to become open book take-homes, because I don't know how else they would do exams.
- Alison Monahan: Clearly, it's almost certain that schools have to give open book exams at this point. I don't see how you could possibly enforce a closed book take-home. I mean, they might try; that would be a real stretch for most people with the Honor Code probably. But if you've never done open book exams, these are different. I mean, this to me would be totally normal because we only had open book exams, but that wasn't really the case for you, Lee, right?
- Lee Burgess: No, we had closed book in-class exams, pretty much exclusively. Actually I don't think I had one take-home exam, I only had papers or in-class exams. So, this is going to, again, stretch professors, but also maybe you're at a school that you've never had this situation. One of the things we'll link to in this post is we do have a lot of recommendations for studying for open book or take-home exams, and we will continue to create new content around this, so stay tuned. This is the direction where everybody's going. I mean, the schools haven't announced this stuff because everybody's scrambling so fast, but the more we hear from people on the ground, the more we're happy to provide resources. And if you're listening to this and you're studying at home and you have questions, you should email them to us because we think that our content calendar is going to shift and we're going to be talking about this stuff a lot.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, we're happy to record whatever you want, so send us your ideas.
- Lee Burgess: Yes. Send us your ideas and let us know you're okay because it's nice, this is a community as well. I think the other thing to think about is if you used your library for a lot of resources, it's really going to be time to shift to online resources or downloadable resources. Get that iPad ready, get the Kindle app ready.



Alison Monahan: One of our tutors who was talking about this. At the school she works at, a lot of the students go to the library and look at the study aids, and they can't do that now. And we are all concerned about what they are going to do now. I actually saw something from one of the publishers today saying that they are essentially willing to negotiate with schools on digital access. So, if you are someone who used a lot of commercial outlines and things at the library, and now you don't have access to those and you're concerned about the cost of buying them and that kind of thing – again, talk to your school, because they may be able to actually go to the publisher and say, "Look, we've already paid for these materials. We want to give our students access. Can you do that?" And the answer seems like it could be "Yes".

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So again, this is a great opportunity to reach out to your school and give these suggestions of, "This is what I need. Can you help us get this?" Because the school has much more negotiating power than an individual law student.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I've already seen that they're giving digital versions of casebooks and things like that. So, definitely something to keep an eye on. I think practice in this new format. I mean, it's probably too early for you to really start thinking about full practice exams, but if you've never taken an open book exam, it's a different experience. So you want to make sure that you've practiced. You probably want to have a cheat sheet in front of you and things like that, but you need to kind of work on those and know what they look like to make them effective.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. If you're still going to need outlines, they might be slightly different. They might be more kind of attack plan based or they may have longer... I know that you and I have talked about for open book exams we have to have the longer outline and the shorter outline and the cheat sheet outline. The documentation that you're going to create may start to shift. So, as you're starting to do practice, maybe before you are testing yourself trying to do very focused practice, more closed book, now it's time to shift. Hold those outlines next to you and see if those outlines are helping you answer questions, because I think one of the things that's important to think about with open book exams is, are your materials getting you what you need? And you can start testing that right now.

Alison Monahan: Right. You're not going to be spending as much time literally memorizing the material, but it means you're going to probably have to go a little bit deeper. And again, it depends. Is this a three hour take-home? Is this an eight-hour take-home? Is it a 24-hour take-home? Those are all different. We're not going to go into them in detail, but probably we'll record something about it, so stay tuned.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. That might be one of our next things.



- Alison Monahan: Exactly. We're here for you.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, we're here for you.
- Alison Monahan: We'll do some more exam content later. Let's talk about the big elephant in the room, which is really the stress and anxiety piece, because I think this whole situation is just... You cannot conceive of a better way to make people crazy, basically.
- Lee Burgess: No. I mean, this has really been a unique challenge for me, I think. I think it's a unique challenge for everybody. I have really found myself stretching as a business owner, as a mother, as a spouse, as somebody who has parents who are older. We're worried about choices that other people in our family are making. You and I are talking about each other's choices and making sure we're staying safe. We are writing to our team and making sure they are safe. This is crazy. I mean, I had weird stress dreams the other night. I mean, this is nuts. We used to say the bar exam was hard; this is way weirder and scarier to me than that. Yeah, I mean, this is a lot.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. My friend was talking to me and she said, "I'm afraid I have the coronavirus because I keep having these episodes where I can't breathe." And I said, "Well, do you have a fever?" She said, "No, I don't have a fever." I'm like, "You're having a panic attack."
- Lee Burgess: It's true. I know, I know. I wear an Apple Watch, and it's got a heart rate tracker on it and one day it didn't think I had a resting heart rate for most of the day, even though I'd driven in the car and I had... I was so anxious, so I didn't have a resting heart rate.
- Alison Monahan: That's really bad.
- Lee Burgess: Well, it's returned.
- Alison Monahan: That's good.
- Lee Burgess: It's okay. It was one day. Yeah, we're all under a huge amount of stress. So, some mistakes that I am making and maybe the first thing that I am trying to start to do is call my consumption of information, because like I said, every alert sends you into a panic, and that's not good for anybody. So, you've got to figure out what parameters around digesting information you want to make.
- Alison Monahan: No, I think everyone probably should read less news, frankly. And we're all guilty of this. I definitely do that one like, "Oh, I'll just take one look at the Style section of the New York Times before I go to sleep." And then an hour later, I've basically read every recent article about every horrible thing that's happening.



That is not good. I'm trying to stop. I actually can't stop, but I'm trying. I'm committing to trying.

Lee Burgess: We are trying.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. As a student too, I think it's really helpful to try as much as possible to have a schedule and a routine, and there are tools that can help here. So, even just something as simple as a Google Calendar to actually plan your day. You can use tools we've talked about before, like [Trello](#) and [Asana](#) to make a to-do list or organize information. My personal favorite – we can link to this, from the Girl's Guide to Law School site – is [The Circles method](#). This is really what got me through that second semester of first year, when I had been clinically depressed. I hadn't been really doing anything until the last month of school, and I managed to get it together and take my exams and pass them. But this was really the way that I did it. So, I think some procedure basically that you can do to stay on track. For some people that may also be having other people there for accountability. So, the virtual study group type of thing, or even just committing with a friend like, "Okay, we're both going to sit down for the next hour and do work." That kind of social accountability can be really helpful.

Lee Burgess: True. And in our Bar Exam space we create study schedules for people who are studying on their own. And some of the things that we've seen that can work is really making a list of tasks for the day and trying to assign the amount of time that you're going to do each of those tasks. And you can use something like Trello or Asana to check things off as they get done, or even create a project that you share with another person. So, you could create a curriculum for yourselves and then check things off as you each do them. I think that one of the things that we have learned by helping other people structure their study in kind of an unstructured environment is, it needs to be shorter chunks of time, like 90 minutes or so, because you can't just say, "I'm going to sit down for three hours and study." That's never really worked for anyone, but I think in this current environment, that's a very hard thing to do. So, setting these intermittent goals and checking them off, and being realistic and trying to come up with some sort of active engagement, is really important.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I think getting specific and chunking it down to something that's manageable, that you can do, also gives you a much better sense of control. You know me, I always paper everything. So this morning I woke up in my house and I was like, "Okay, I've got to figure out everything." And then I got out an index card and started making a list of, "What do I need to get from this store? What do I need to do?" And it actually made me feel better just to see it all. So I think just something that you can have and you can kind of be like, "Okay, I can do this. In this minor universe, I can cope." I think that's going to be really helpful for people.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And sometimes I find even doing some of those lists the night before, so you wake up to a plan, can be very comforting. I had a boss once when I was in my early 20s, who was very meticulous at the end of day. We were consultants and she was very meticulous at the end of the day. She would clean up her desk, pile everything very neatly, and make her to-do list on a notepad with these little boxes. She used to create boxes, she was very meticulous. She had these boxes. But her whole thing was when she got to work the next morning, she just wanted to start working. I did not run my desk like that, but as my life has gotten more complicated, I have more responsibilities, I think there is something to be said for having a plan. So, at 9:00 or whenever you decide that you are going to start your day the next day, you sit down and start doing it-
- Alison Monahan: No, I think that makes sense.
- Lee Burgess: Because working from home, whether it's studying or working at your job... When I left firm life and started working on my own projects at home, it was quite an adjustment to create some sort of accountability structure for myself.
- Alison Monahan: That is probably also an entirely separate podcast that we can definitely do, because I completely agree with you. It is not that easy to suddenly shift to working from home and being in charge of your own schedule, but it is possible.
- Lee Burgess: It is possible.
- Alison Monahan: We are running way over time, so let's finish up our stress piece and then we'll just do some more podcasts later. One thing I think people really ought to think about doing is really reaching out to people, whether that is a virtual dinner party where you cook the same thing and then your chat with your glass of wine, or a movie that we mentioned earlier, or really just checking in. A friend of mine that I hadn't talked to for a while, just randomly checked in with me the other day and I was like, "Wow, that was so nice." And frankly, her situation was way crazier than mine, but that made me think, "Oh, there are people I should check in with and see how they're doing." I think we just all need to kind of reach out and stay connected.
- Lee Burgess: I have tried to make a habit of instead of checking the news, I send a text instead...
- Alison Monahan: Oh, that's good.
- Lee Burgess: ...to somebody, because I have a need to do something. But I also have talked to friends in Seattle and friends that I don't talk to all the time. I think it is very comforting and I have been comforted myself by the fact that... We talked about we use Slack in our business, we're all checking in with each other. I had a long text conversation with one of our team members last night and we were



comparing coping notes or whatever. I think that this is a time when those conversations are of use so much better than the Internet does. It's just like a news information system. Or even Facebook, which I have had to stop looking at, because I can't read and consume all the articles that people are posting. So, I would highly recommend the "send a text, don't read the news" plan. It's much healthier.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, even Instagram has kind of gone down the rabbit hole where I'm like, "I shouldn't really look at pictures of bread"... I don't know. I'm trapped at home making bread; I'm like, "Oh God." So I think just be gentle with yourself and other people; everyone is really doing the best they can. This might be a time for extra sleep, extra things like meditation or yoga that you can do in your living room, all these kinds of things. Or even virtual therapy – that is totally an option.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. [inaudible] is starting to do Zoom conference calls, so you just sent out an email to everybody.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And also, all emotions are valid here. You might find yourself feeling real grief over something that seems fairly trivial, and that's fine. We're all going to grieve in different ways, but it's going to be there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. The other thing I do want to suggest is, I have noticed a lot of exercise providers, yoga studios, people are putting a lot of content out there for free right now, meditation resources. So, that's the one thing I think that Instagram has been sharing, is a lot of providers are doing things for free. So, especially if you're really scared about money, don't feel like you have to go pay for online yoga. I think there's a lot being offered right now that's low to no cost. So, that's something to reach out to. And there are really cute videos on the Internet. Have you seen the one of [the penguins walking through the museum](#), that they let the penguins out? Have you seen this one yet?

Alison Monahan: I saw a headline about that, but I haven't seen it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it might be one of the cutest things I've seen. So, take a break, watch the penguins walk through the museum.

Alison Monahan: Wow. I didn't understand the headline. It was one of those where I was like, "What is this about? I don't know. I'll look at that later." But now I'll go back and find it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so they basically let... Maybe we can link to it in the show notes, because I think it's a great mental health break. They let the penguins out of the penguin habitat and are letting them walk through the empty museum to look at the other exhibits.



Alison Monahan: Oh wow.

Lee Burgess: It's amazing.

Alison Monahan: That's so great.

Lee Burgess: I know, it's really cute. It's really cute. But sharing that kind of stuff, texting your friends cute videos. Also, I just have to say as a parent, if you do have small children, I think a lot of people are starting to create great content to help keep our children entertained. My personal favorite that I'm sharing with everybody, because I think he's so great is, there's a children's author named Mo Willems who is apparently a Kennedy artist-in-residence, and he is doing [daily lunchtime doodle videos](#), where he's walking kids through drawing exercises. And it's the cutest thing I've ever seen since Mister Rogers. He's posting them every day at noon, and my son is asking when it will be posted. And other friends' kids are doing these videos and we're all emailing pictures of it. And there's something to be said about the ability of this technology world to still connect us and make us all feel good in these really terrible times. So, taking some time to see – other than the penguins, which are pretty amazing – what else is out there to help support all of you. I think there's some special stuff coming out there, and so we all need to look for that. This is one of those "look for the helpers" situations. A lot of people are trying to assist each other to get through this. I think that there's going to be some amazing stuff that comes out of this really awful time. I have faith in that.

Alison Monahan: I think that's true. A friend of mine had an idea of doing a virtual morning meditation group and I was like, "Oh, I would definitely... Sign me up for that, yes. As long as it's not too early." It's like, "Why not?"

Lee Burgess: You're like, "I'm not a 6:00 AMer."

Alison Monahan: I'm like, "The 7:00 AM time is not going to really work for me, but you can record it and I'll listen to it when I wake up." Alright, well, we're way over time now, so any final thoughts on this?

Lee Burgess: Oh, I think that we just all have got to stick together. This is going to be weird, I think. We want to stay present for our listeners and we're going to try and do the best that we can support you. You can still write in questions or contact us or let us know what's happening at your law schools. We're happy to hear and to try and help. I think we're going to all take care of our own communities, but we're all in this together. I saw another reminder, a year from now, hopefully we will be just talking about what this was like.



Alison Monahan: Right. Like everything else, this will eventually pass and one day it's going to be a story, like, "Where were you when that happened?" So, we've just got to get through it in the best way that we can.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, good luck everybody! Stay safe, stay healthy and stay tuned. We'll keep working on this together.

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

RESOURCES:

[Podcast Episode 19: Conquering Different Types of Law School Exams](#)

[Tips for Take-Home Exams](#)

[Tips for Studying for an Open Book Law School Exam](#)

[How to Use Technology in Your Law School Study Group](#)

[Need to Get More Done in Law School? Try the Circles.](#)

[Slack](#)

[Trello](#)

[Asana](#)

[LUNCH DOODLES with Mo Willems!](#)

[Penguins tour their empty Chicago aquarium](#)