



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about getting ready for law school as an incoming 1L in these, shall we say, interesting times. 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. 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 would 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 getting ready for law school as an incoming 1L in these, shall we say, interesting times, to put it lightly. Well, we've talked a lot about starting law school many times before, but never in such a context. So, as we've had to start doing now – which I never thought we'd have to do – we need to date all of our podcasts because we are talking with the information we have as of today. And today is July 2nd.

Alison Monahan: Woo-hoo, ready for that Fourth of July holiday.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I know, right, where we all stay home.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Alright, so first, to kick things off, I guess we can talk about some of the standard topics that we cover when you're thinking about starting law school. And then we're going to shift and look at how the coronavirus is impacting people's plannings, because we've been talking to a lot of people who are getting ready to start their 1L year. So, Alison, just as in any year, do incoming 1Ls need to learn a lot of the law before classes start? What should people be doing over the summer?

Alison Monahan: Well, this is a question we get a lot. I think a lot of people are asking, "What can I do to kind of get ahead this summer?" One of our favorites is always, "Do I need to worry about learning tort law?" or whatever, if you even know what classes you're taking. The answer to this really is "No." There is basically no point in you trying to sit down with a casebook. I definitely remember I tried to read some full Supreme Court cases before I started law school. It was kind of interesting. It definitely did not help me one bit in law school, because your experience there is in some ways going to be curated for you. So your professors are going to want you to think about things in a certain way. They're going to want you to read cases and look for certain things. They're going to



explain some of the material to you in a certain way. So I personally don't think there's a whole lot of value in just sitting down with, say, a Con Law casebook or even a supplement, necessarily, and trying to figure it out. Do you?

Lee Burgess: No, I don't think so. You're going to law school to learn the law. They don't expect you to know it. And it's often times very confusing if you read a different interpretation of it than what's going to be covered in your class, and then you have your own knowledge fighting with the professor's knowledge. There's plenty of time to learn the law in school. I think that a lot of people think that they have to go in overprepared with the law so they can compete, but the reality is, you don't really compete until either a midterm or a final. You have plenty of time.

Alison Monahan: Right. And there are lots of different versions of the law, so... And what people also don't necessarily appreciate immediately is, your first year of courses don't necessarily cover every single topic. So if you just sit down with a commercial outline that's 300 pages and you try to start reading and learn everything, your class is probably going to cover maybe 20% of that. Maybe 50%, maybe. So you don't even know what topics are going to be covered. So I just think, if it makes you feel better, go for it, but I think it's basically just going to be kind of confusing and not actually going to help you at all in the end.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think so. But what we do think that you can do is work on your study skills, which is why we developed our [Start Law School Right class](#).

Alison Monahan: We don't necessarily think you should do nothing. We just don't think you should go read an outline.

Lee Burgess: Right, because study skills and time management skills and understanding how to read cases, understanding the hierarchy of the courts – all of that kind of stuff is good information to have when you're starting in law school. So the first case that you're reading is not one of the first cases for class. They always assign something crazy like *Pennoyer v. Neff* or something that's very difficult to get through right before your first class.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. I remember we read something from the 1800s, and you're just like, "What is a demurrer to whatever, whatever?" Some crazy old English case. And you're just like, "What is this even talking about?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, I think that if you want to get some experience, understanding what the law school experience is going to feel like, I think that a Start Law School Right-type course can give you a leg up because then you're not trying to think about how you're going to take your class notes, or think about how you're going to brief your cases, think about how you might write the answer to a



hypo. You will at least have done all those things once. So skills, I think, are good to work on, but I think law is not the best use of your time.

Alison Monahan: I agree. And I think, in addition to skills, which I strongly encourage people to think about, I think also just doing some more difficult reading, something besides just the New York Times on your phone, to kind of get your brain back into that mode. Because the reading load in law school is going to be very, very intense, and it's almost like you have to exercise that muscle. So, if you're looking for something that might actually help you, pull out a really dense novel or something that's super long. You're really going to have to read, I don't know, Salman Rushdie or *War and Peace* or something, that you've really got to keep all these pieces. Or read some nonfiction. I think that's actually potentially beneficial.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's true, just to get your brain going.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's hard, especially if you've been working for a few years outside of law school. If you haven't read anything academic for a long time, it's a different beast. I think another thing people could read would be, if there's an area of the law that you're interested in, you could just Google some Law Review articles on them. I think those could also be interesting. Often times Law Review articles aren't necessarily drafted for only legal eyes. And so, if you're really interested in environmental law, there are environmental law journals out there. It could be kind of interesting to read some of that information and just get thinking about what could be current in different areas of the law.

Alison Monahan: I think that's a great idea. I definitely remember reading a few books on the way in, in areas that I thought I would be interested in and just sort of picked up. And yeah, they're not written necessarily for a technical audience, so it was a good way to just have some things on your mind to be thinking about and kind of get your brain running along those pathways.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, another thing people seem pretty obsessed with is this idea of study groups. And I think maybe we can talk a little bit about how COVID is going to totally turn all of that on its head. But should people be worrying about study groups even before school starts?

Alison Monahan: I don't think that's necessary. I have heard from some people that schools are doing sort of virtual introductions and people are already kind of stressing out about this. Sure, if you hit it off with someone, but you don't even know if you're going to be in the same section as that person. I think there's plenty of time for this, and it's just not something you need to be stressing out over right now.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's true. There's plenty to stress over. Don't worry about that. There's plenty of time to meet friends, and study groups are a really personal thing. Some people, it doesn't work well for them. Some people just want to work with one other person. You need some time to try and find those other people. And if you're in a virtual environment for much of the fall, it might be even harder to find some of those people. So, don't worry about it now. You don't even know what the semester looks like yet.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. You don't even know where you're going to be living right now.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Are you going to get locked out of the best study group is probably not a particularly great thing to be stressing over. I don't know, people do get really nuts about it.
- Lee Burgess: No. I think that's not your key to success.
- Alison Monahan: No. I remember as a 1L in orientation, that someone I met was really upset because he had been blocked from joining a study group that was only for Harvard students apparently, that someone had created. And he was really mad because he had gone to Yale, and he thought he should qualify anyway. I was just like, "Wow, this is really not making me want to have a study group, any of this."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think it's just one of those things that people like to fixate on because they can control it, but it's not what's going to make a huge difference.
- Alison Monahan: Right. The organizer and I both ended up on the Law Review, so it was fine. I didn't need to be in his Harvard-only study group.
- Lee Burgess: Totally.
- Alison Monahan: And this other guy who went to Yale, didn't. So, I mean, maybe he was right. Anyway, don't be a pain in the ass about your study group, basically. You'll find one eventually.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's just not something to worry about.
- Alison Monahan: If you want one.
- Lee Burgess: I think this is going to be a unique challenge given the state of the world, but really the other thing you can do to get ahead during the summer – and we're going to kind of talk about some life logistics – is really to get your life in order,



because I think that the more stress outside of academia that you're shouldering, the harder it's going to be to stay focused and successful.

Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely. Well, let's switch gears a little bit and talk about some of those life logistics, because I think many of them are a lot more complicated, unfortunately, right now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, housing.

Alison Monahan: That's huge.

Lee Burgess: I guess it depends on if you're going to school. We don't know. I mean, I don't know that a lot of schools have committed. I know that I've seen more undergraduate institutions starting to commit to a plan, but the world is also rapidly changing, not in a positive way. So that also may leave those plans up for change. So, if your school's going to be in-person, are you sure that they're going to be in-person? I think what happened to a lot of folks is if you go get housing that is sponsored by the university, if there is another shutdown, where would you go?

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, I think this is a huge issue. I've even seen speculation that schools are claiming they're going to go in-person and then get their deposits, and then they decide maybe this isn't such a great plan. But the real problem here is, so many people are relying on university housing. So I think you've really got to ask about these options if you are going to move out of the place. I mean, I was moving to New York. I was giving up my San Francisco place to live. If they had taken away my housing, I would have had nowhere to go. I think this is probably going to vary a lot by school, but I think you definitely want to know. I mean, the spring was one thing because that was sort of, "Oh my gosh, total emergency. Let's just close the dorms, basically." But this is not an emergency situation right now. I think they need to have a plan, so that you understand what might happen if you are suddenly asked to move out.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and not everybody can just move home with their parents. I think there's this assumption that college students or university students can just move home, but some people's parents don't live in the U.S., or they don't have parents that have rooms for them, or it's not a good situation for them. You just can't leave campus and have a housing situation set up, so you really need to get those answers.

Alison Monahan: I hadn't lived with my parents since I went to boarding school at 16, and the odds of me moving back in with them at close to 30 were literally zero.

Lee Burgess: Right.



- Alison Monahan: Just like, "That's not happening." So, I think these are difficult decisions. Personally for me, I would just put off this decision as long as is feasible.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: And even consider, ask these questions like, "What if I put down a deposit and then it's unclear if we're going to go or not go? What happens to that deposit?" It's hard too if you have to find housing outside of the university, because then you've got to be negotiating with a landlord and all these things. This is not an easy topic.
- Lee Burgess: No. And do we know what's going to happen with student loans and things like that? I guess if it's virtual, the student loans will still come through.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. The ABA has made it pretty clear that they're not going to ding people for taking virtual classes.
- Lee Burgess: Right, so yeah. So I guess that's one thing you can think about if you are getting some sort of off-campus housing is, you can probably still assume you'll get your loans. And if part of those loans are to help you provide housing, then maybe you can just live wherever, even if there's a shutdown.
- Alison Monahan: In some ways, it's easier if you have off-campus housing because then it's just between you and the landlord. They're not going to kick you out.
- Lee Burgess: Right. And it is interesting too, because I know that I've been reading about undergraduate institutions who are going to school a bit earlier in August, and then they're ending their semesters at Thanksgiving, and either doing exams virtually, or doing exams before Thanksgiving so that nobody goes home and then comes back.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: So there also could be maybe some interesting housing options of just trying to find a setup for just the fall, where there's maybe some uncertainty. Maybe it's subletting a place and not signing a lease until you get more information.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Even Airbnb for three or four months actually is a very good idea. It could work.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Especially if then you get six weeks or two months between the next... We just don't know. But if you have a long break between the semesters, I think it's interesting.



- Alison Monahan: Right. No, there are a lot of variables basically, but I think particularly with the university housing, you just really need to be clear on what's going to happen if this all goes south, which it could do fairly quickly.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and there are going to be inherent risks because you're at the whim of the university.
- Alison Monahan: Right. We saw what they did in the spring, all of them, basically.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: "Oh, you're on spring break. Just never come back."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Yeah, that's reasonable." I think you just want to be clear on what might happen if something similar to that begins to happen again.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Other things that are things to think about. I think food is a big one, because you may not have the same restaurant options or on-campus food options that you used to have as they try and control crowds. So it might be that you need to come up with food solutions, whether it's going to be cooking or some sort of meal planning, or I don't know. You need to really think through how you're going to try and manage food and not just live off pizza.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think this pandemic has shown us if nothing else that learning to cook is a really valuable life skill, and it is something that everyone needs. And it doesn't have to be fancy; this can be very, very basic. But if you don't know how to cut up a vegetable or you don't have any pots and pans, all of these things – this is a great time over the summer to really focus on that. I've actually been helping a few of my friends get up to speed, like, "What pots and pans do I really need?" All these kinds of things. And it doesn't have to be fancy, but they just need these basic supplies or they literally can't feed themselves at this point.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true. And it can be a stress reliever. I think a lot of people find cooking relaxing once you know how to do it. And so, if you can invest a little time in it through just YouTube, finding some recipe books – a lot of this information is free online. You just have to kind of poke around and find it, but I think it's worthwhile. And also, if you have any sort of dietary restrictions, I think being able to cook for yourself is going to help keep you healthier. And this is a time when you want to stay as healthy as possible.
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. I'll put in a plug here – I know you have one as well – for the InstaPot. I think that's life changing.



- Lee Burgess: Love it!
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you don't like to cook – and there are people who just really don't like cooking – you can just literally put stuff in that and come back in 30 or 40 minutes later – you have something you can eat. It's kind of amazing.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's really amazing. Like 10-minute prep times, 12-minute prep times, and then you press a button. I'm a big fan.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So I think, get that, get a couple of basic pots and pans, and you should be able to keep yourself alive with food at least.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And we usually talk about exercise, and we talk about finding the right yoga class and what gym are you going to go to? And things have changed around that too, but you need to still have movement in your life to be healthy and sane. You need those endorphins. I did my 30 minutes of spinning this morning, which definitely made my outlook on the world look a little bit better. So, I think you've got to find what works for you. Luckily, people are creating a ton of content right now, but I think you have to figure out what you need that could be sustainable.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely. I, about a week ago, realized that I was walking like 1,000 steps a day or something, which was literally from my house to the coffee place that does takeout one block away and back. I was like, "Alright, this is probably not good." So I sucked it up and I got the Apple Watch. And now I'm totally obsessed, and I'm doing 10X or 20X that amount of exercise every day. And I have to say, I hate to say this because I would like it not to be true, but it really is true that it has improved my mood.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, it does. I got a Peloton, and I had never been to spin class since maybe I was 21. It was kind of a last-ditch effort of, "I've got to find something to do." And I will be honest, I love it. I do. I never thought I'd be a spinning person. My friends have been obsessed with it, one of my other college roommates just got one and we were just chatting about getting her set up. But it's a big deal; that 30 minutes is really critical. I can tell if I have not been using it. The endorphins are no joke. Chemically, it helps your brain.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and particularly if you're going to be sitting alone a lot of the time reading, I think you really do have to focus on getting some movement because your body is going to fall apart otherwise. And as you pointed out, this is not a time that you really need your body falling apart. You need to be as healthy as possible.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And if you're someone who gets massages and goes to acupuncture...



- Alison Monahan: Who used to.
- Lee Burgess: ...and does a lot of self-care. Yeah, who used to – you have to also figure out how to keep your body together without a lot of those resources.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, that's so sad.
- Lee Burgess: That's another thing that you're going to have to think about. Yeah, I know, makes me sad.
- Alison Monahan: I really would like to go see my massage person and get acupuncture, but not happening.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Oh well.
- Lee Burgess: I miss my chiropractor. Yeah, I know.
- Alison Monahan: Oh well. It's time to do some self-massage, I guess but...
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. So, technology has now become even more important than it seems like it used to be. So, what do we really need to get started for tech this year?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think, ironically, it's super back to basics on some level. It's all about your Internet connection.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, because without a solid Internet, how can you participate in class?
- Alison Monahan: Right. This is one of these situations where you might have been able to muddle through with kind of not so great Internet at your house because you had great Internet at your school or in the library, and you're going to be there all day. Now you actually need this in your house. And so, I think that even comes down in some ways to deciding where to live. You really can't live some place that does not have solid Internet.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Wasn't one of our tutors talking to us about how a professor – I don't think I was a law professor – was recommending it was cool if students wanted to go to Bali, but they still had to have Internet, or something like that, to do virtual classes.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, I didn't see that.
- Lee Burgess: It's important to still be practical. You have to shop around, and it can get really expensive. So you want to see what your options are, see if you can get



promotional deals, see if you could negotiate your rates. But you need to have solid Internet.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. The irony is when I lived in Mexico City, I had better Internet than I do in San Francisco for about half the price. And I had two redundant lines coming in – one cable and one fiber, so it was basically the best Internet probably I'll ever have in my life. Too bad the borders are all shut, because you probably could find better Internet in other countries.

Lee Burgess: In Mexico, that's right.

Alison Monahan: But yeah, I think this isn't something you can just think will work out. You have to make sure you have really solid Internet. Beyond that, obviously you need a laptop, it needs to have a camera, it needs to have functioning speakers, all of these things. I still am not totally convinced you have to buy a new one, which we've talked about before. Maybe you postpone that for a year or so, but I think it is more important that you have a very solid functional computer set up than normal.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I agree. Yeah, it just needs to not break. So, if you've got a system that's on the verge of crashing, maybe you don't want that kind of drama. Because one of the things I've learned in the COVID world – everything takes longer to solve. So where it used to be, "Ah, my thing broke. I'll just run to the Apple store" – It doesn't really work that way.

Alison Monahan: No.

Lee Burgess: But I will share my Apple support tip. I just found out that you can now text with them. You can text with Apple support and somebody will text you back and forth, and then they save the chat and you can return to it if a problem does not resolve. It's pretty amazing, and it's a much easier way of solving things than most customer supports. You also have to recognize that there are a lot of different ways to solve tech problems. But yeah, nothing is solved fast because everything has to be mailed to you now.

Alison Monahan: Right. I just saw Apple was reclosing a lot more stores in different places. So yeah, this idea that you can just pop down there and take it to the Genius Bar and they'll solve your problem – maybe not going to happen.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You probably shouldn't just have one power cord, because you can't run to the store and get another power cord if your power cord gives out. You probably need to have two power cords. You just want to make sure that you have a solid setup that's not going to fall apart quickly.

Alison Monahan: And please, for the love of God, back up your work.



Lee Burgess: Yes.

Alison Monahan: Get Dropbox.

Lee Burgess: Get Dropbox.

Alison Monahan: Back it up. Do not rely on a hard drive. Just back up everything.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, a lot of people have questions about relationships, which have already been put through the ringer, if you have a relationship.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Or, I have some friends who started new COVID relationships. They just started dating someone right before, and then they kind of went into quarantine together. So there are lots of people... Every relationship is being tested in different ways, but I think that school is often a moment where people decide whether or not they want to stay together.

Alison Monahan: A lawyer friend of mine started dating someone, they went into quarantine together and then they've already broken up. He was like, "Well, it's only been three months, but it felt like three years."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, it was probably a very efficient relationship though. You're like, "Not going to work."

Alison Monahan: Exactly. "We've got some unsolvable problems here. I found that out pretty fast. Yeah, I think this is one of those where... This summer really is your "stay or go" moment, ideally.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Are you going to stay in this relationship or are you going to get out of it? I did the long-distance thing my first semester. It was horrible, it was highly annoying, I didn't have time for it. I had a lot of resentment build up because I had to talk with this person every day. And I was like, "You don't understand. I don't have time to talk to you." Which of course, they didn't like either. So I think ideally you just want to kind of clarify this for yourself to the extent possible.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And again, it goes back to the theme we were talking about earlier: Try and reduce the drama you can control. So, if this relationship isn't serving you, then take some thoughts and some time to decide if it should be in your life.



- Alison Monahan: Right, and this is a great reason to end something that's already not really working.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, well, we've mentioned it quite a bit, but the big elephant in the room is, what's going to happen with the pandemic?
- Alison Monahan: Oh, wouldn't we all like to know.
- Lee Burgess: Wouldn't we all like to know. Oh my gosh, yeah. The reality is, we are all having to learn to be flexible, because we cannot plan ahead which, I think for all of our personality types, is really challenging.
- Alison Monahan: Right. The people who decide to go to law school are typically people who plan, they execute, they're good at getting things done. All of that has become a lot harder now. So, I think this is a great life opportunity to try to extend yourself and others some grace and start dealing with uncertainty and figure out some coping strategies, because the reality is, you are definitely going to need them.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's true. And I think in the school context, what's going to be critical is you're going to have to really be able to work autonomously and teach yourself material because...
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: This is not a normal situation. You're going to have less access to professors and teaching assistants and academic support. You're going to have to make online appointments with them, and you're going to be in Zoom office hours. That format is not easy for a lot of people, and so that may also be a challenge for you. So, you're going to have to really prime yourself to think about how to learn this information and reach out for help if you need it. I think we've been talking to incoming 1Ls who know that this format is going to be rough for them, and they want to make sure that they have somebody helping them along in the background. And if that's something that you're interested in, that's another thing you can explore before school, so if you want to call in those resources, you know what your options are.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think this is definitely a scenario where you are going to have to figure out what you personally need, and then advocate for that in whatever way that looks like. It may be that you need accommodations of some type for Zoom classes or something. On the one hand, I actually think Zoom could be easier for certain people because I think there may be less pressure of being on the spot and having everyone looking at you and you get called on and things like that. So I don't think that's necessarily a total disaster, but I do think it's going to be harder to stay engaged in the class and then just access after class and that kind of thing. You can't just pop up. I don't know if this is happening in your law



school, but I remember whenever the professor ended class, there would always be this rush of 10 people who wanted to go ask more questions at the podium and things like that. I don't know, maybe they'll keep the chat room open for 10 minutes or something, but those experiences of, "I've got to go talk to them right now" just aren't really going to be happening.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's very true. One of the other challenges – and I think we're seeing this everywhere right now – is, if you're going to prioritize your health and be safe, you really need to think about what your boundaries are going to be, especially if you are living on campus, near campus, around campus. I think this is really a pain point for almost everyone, because everyone's got to negotiate what they feel comfortable with and what they don't, and what does the social distancing mean for you. I can't tell you how many people I've talked to and said, "We did a social distancing hangout with family, but there were still moments where I was definitely not comfortable and I didn't know how to negotiate that." This is going to go on for a while.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and it's just so terrifying when you see all these cases coming out already in the summer around college campuses and college bars and things like that, because that's such a big piece of the equation of being a university student, whether it's law school or undergrad – you're hanging out, you're drinking, there is bar review every Thursday or whatever it was. That's a big part of the social life, but now it's become pretty dangerous. And some people are going to have more or less concern about that, so I think there is just going to be this constant process of, "I'm not personally comfortable with what's happening right now. I need to get out of this situation." I think it's going to cause a lot of social issues for people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and there's no playbook for this.

Alison Monahan: Right. We're all basically epidemiologists now.

Lee Burgess: Right, we're all trying to figure it out and trying to decide what makes the most sense, and it's a moving target. What may have felt okay last week is not feeling okay this week, and I think that's okay. But you do have to just be clear with yourself what those boundaries are and then feel comfortable setting them, because the stakes are incredibly high.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I just cancelled a camping trip that two weeks ago seemed like a fine plan, and then suddenly I was like, "Wait a second. This does not seem like a fine plan for doing this two weeks from today. I should probably just pull the plug on it." But even then you're like, "Well, is this person I'm going with, are they going to be upset? Are they're not going to be my friend anymore, whatever?" It was fine.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, but it's hard. It's exhausting. It's really exhausting.
- Alison Monahan: It definitely is. Yeah, and when people are making different risk assessments, I think that's hard too. You may have friends who are more or less risk-averse than you are, and then there's just constant tension of, "Well, why can't we do this?" or, "I don't feel comfortable with that." But I think that's just the reality you're dealing and I think just getting clear on what you feel comfortable with is probably the best way forward.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also think that if you haven't been getting comfortable and experimenting with virtual ways to stay connected and build relationships, doing video chats with current friends, getting comfortable doing things over Zoom – maybe schedule some Zoom happy hours. I think a lot of folks are feeling like, "Ugh, I just can't. I'm Zoomed out, I just can't do this anymore." But this is the world right now, and we have to figure out how to make those connections and keep them alive. And I think it's good for the soul. We just can't do all of this stuff alone. So whether it be your law school interpersonal relationships or the ones you have before law school, you just have to try to keep it going, even though it's not in the format that you want.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I've become more of a fan of the shared activity Zoom versus the sit-down and everyone has a beer and looks at each other and tries to talk over each other. I can't stand the Zoom happy hour, frankly. But it was working really well with my friend's boyfriend, who's a chef. Once a week for an hour, we all make the same dish. And he sends out a recipe, he sends out the ingredients. We get the ingredients, and we make them together. And that works really well because we're all just doing this thing, but then we're also chatting. So, I think you can get creative with it.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and it's a stress relief. I did a long walk yesterday with one of my best friends from college over the phone, and we hadn't really caught up in a while. And it just feeds your soul in a different way. I'm a pretty extroverted person. I don't like not being with people, it's not good for me. And so, I'm sometimes surprised how some interactions are more meaningful than I think they're going to be, because there's part of me that's not getting what I need from the world because of the situation. That's fine, I will make those sacrifices. But I'm not thriving in that way, because that's not how I've chosen to set up my life.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think a lot of this is really just... If you are feeling like, "Oh God. I'm just so over this. I'm so tired", whatever – I think it's really about trying some stuff and seeing what works. For me, I was actually really surprised that it turns out that taking long walks is really great, because what I'm doing now is instead of just doing the same pathway that maybe I was doing for 30 minutes, now I'm like, "Oh gosh, I've got to walk for at least an hour". So, I'll just set off in a



direction, and then I realize one of the things that was making me kind of be like, "Ugh, this totally sucks", is I just didn't have any novelty in my life.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And so now, it's actually just enough novelty on a daily basis to walk in a totally different direction and explore a different neighborhood. That makes me happier.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I actually did that yesterday on my conference call walk, and I found some really cool houses and some different stuff. Yeah, it was great.

Alison Monahan: So, I think you need these little things. This is not earth-shaking that we walked on a different block, but it actually was a really a good change for the mentality.

Lee Burgess: Right. It's all about the simple things these days.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. So, I think sometimes you can just get overwhelmed thinking you have to change everything, but I think these little tweaks in your life can actually produce pretty big results. And so, thinking about ways to maintain, whether you need to be connected to your people and/or you need some novelty – what can make that happen?

Lee Burgess: Right. So, before we run out of time, I think the last thing to think about is, what are your other life commitments? Whether you're responsible for other people, that you take care of other people, and how you're going to make all of that fit with law school, with the pandemic on top of that?

Alison Monahan: Fun!

Lee Burgess: Yeah, things are really complicated, especially with folks who have children. And if you haven't started to noodle on what that means, especially if your children may or may not be going back to school, then I think you need to start brainstorming different solutions of how your family is going to make this work for you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think this is a really tough one. And I don't think there's a great answer, other than trying to figure out your Plan A, B, C, and D, and what you're going to do if your kid's school shuts down or what you're going to do if your school shuts down, all these different things. And then getting as much information from your school about what would be permitted and that kind of thing. If you had to, could you take leave of absence? Whatever it is, I think you just want to be clear on what you're getting into.



- Lee Burgess: Yep. Complicated. Life is very complicated, yet very simple – sometimes at the same time these days.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, I think that leaves us about out of time. I think my final thoughts are really just, we've all just got to hang in there. It's okay that this is not easy; this is unprecedented. People do adapt, but the world is constantly changing and everyone's having their hard moments. And so, just give yourself a little grace and just keep putting one foot in front of the other.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think it's also fine if you're having the opposite reaction. I talked to a friend of mine the other day who was like, "I feel like I shouldn't tell people this, but I'm pretty happy right now."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, it made sense. She has a nice apartment, she's working from home. She thinks she actually had the virus a long time ago and she recovered. She's like, "I feel like I shouldn't say that out loud", but there may be people listening to this who are like, "You know what? I'm just totally cool with it. I'm going to do my school. I'm chill, I'm fine, everything's great." That's also totally acceptable and you should just feel fine about that.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, lean into it. Enjoy it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Maybe you can even give some life tips to your struggling friends, but don't tell them that you're totally fine.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think everybody's on their own journey. I was talking to another friend of mine who has one child, and one spouse doesn't work and the other spouse is a teacher and is off for the summer. And it was kind of like, "Stuff is boring, but it's okay." And I was like, "Well, I'm trying to pull my hair out, because I'm trying to work, and then the kids are around and this and that." And then I just realized that everybody's situation in this pandemic is different.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: And it changes. One week might be really challenging for someone, and the other week isn't really challenging. It's just... It's hard. Everybody's relationship with this is different, based on what they have on their plate.
- Alison Monahan: No, for sure. Last week, I was totally depressed, and I painted my toenails blue because I was so sad, but now I feel great. So, you really don't know one day or the next.



Lee Burgess: So, the moral is, buy an Apple Watch, take long walks.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, basically get some more exercise, get outside. That's all I've got for you. Alright, well, with that, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. We 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 will talk soon, and good luck starting law school!

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