



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about mid-semester issues, particularly for 1Ls who are experiencing this possibly in a virtual environment. Your Law School Toolbox hosts today are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together, we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the contact form on [lawschooltoolbox.com](#), and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about mid-semester issues, particularly in a virtual or a hybrid law school environment. These are things I didn't even think I'd ever say to describe law school, right?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, well, here we are.

Lee Burgess: Here we are.

Alison Monahan: Here we are in mid-September.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, some of these topics are novel, but some aren't. There's always the October Freakout time for 1Ls. Alison, we've talked about this both on the [blog](#) and I think in [other podcasts](#). So, what is the October Freakout?

Alison Monahan: Well, the October Freakout is basically that time in the fall when the novelty has worn off, the excitement that you're in law school, you're going to meet all these great people, it's so great, you're going to change the world. The novelty has worn off and the reality is setting in. This is really kind of hard, and it's also kind of a slog. Every single day you're doing that reading for many hours a day, you're going to class. You've kind of gotten in the routine, it's not super novel. You also may have midterms coming up, and that can cause a lot of stress because it's that moment of, "Oh my gosh, have I really been doing what I need to do?" And you're going to get feedback. Some people have probably gotten feedback on their first legal writing work and that may not be the feedback they were hoping for. And also winter is coming, particularly a lot of places where law schools are located, they get really serious winters. So winter is coming. And finals are also coming. So, I think that excitement of the August-September had started to wear off and you're not quite in the stress time of actual finals, and so people start to kind of freak out in October.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. It just seems to be like the leaves fall, and all of a sudden you look at the calendar and finals just aren't that many weeks away. I had somebody tell me a few days ago that I think Christmas was 100 days away or something like that, and I had this very visceral reaction to that reality.
- Alison Monahan: Well, and also a lot of schools are moving... They're compressing the calendar, so people are going to have exams sooner than they would normally.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: But even in a normal lifetime where we didn't know what a great law school experience we were actually having... I remember October and having this massive meltdown about not being able to find a summer job – which, do not worry about that right now.
- Lee Burgess: Right, don't worry about that.
- Alison Monahan: And as 2L, I literally went home after talking to someone in, I think it was the... No, it wasn't Career Services because we couldn't talk to them yet, but someone in the, I don't know, Public Interest Organization, whatever. They were very mean to me, and I literally went home in tears. And this 2L who was talking to my roommate was just like, "Okay, you've got to get a grip. Everyone goes through this. You're having this freakout. It's totally normal. You need to take the rest of the day off" – I remember it was a Friday – "and just go walk around the city. It's beautiful right now. It's fall in New York City. It's a perfect day, just take the day off." And I listened. That's one of my clearest memories of my 1L year, is walking around New York City that afternoon, and it was so beautiful. He was right, it was perfect. It was like the perfect leaves were falling, the blue sky, fall was coming. And that was a totally good decision, but I was absolutely having a freakout.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think it's totally normal. And I think this virtual world also, let's just take a second about. Time has very strange meanings right now too, so I feel like this virtual world and this... Whether or not you're completely virtual or in some sort of hybrid situation or you're only on campus a day or two a week – I think that the odd nature of this semester is also going to make time have a bit of a different meaning, because you might be feeling like you're getting less support because you're not in a social environment where you're hanging out with people. A lot of that 1L experience is a social one and there's a little bit of like you're all in this together. And you all are still in this together; you just may not be physically together, and that's got to be a little bit weird. And sometimes that isolation can make things more difficult.



- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. In the story I just told, the 2L would not be there because I've never met this person, and my roommate would never have met this person because how would we in a virtual class?
- Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. And then it might be harder to feel connected to professors or even TAs. I'm not sure how a lot of schools are handling the teaching assistant role in this virtual world, but you're not bumping into anybody, you can't go hang outside somebody's office necessarily. I've been getting feedback from the professors I've interacted with that they are still hoping that students will show up for their virtual office hours or reach out to them, and they have actually communicated to me that students are not engaging as much or not initiating that engagement, that maybe the virtual world feels a little cold to them or they're just not, I don't know, maybe... I think for some people, reaching out virtually would seem easier because they can find professors intimidating. But regardless, professors feel like students aren't engaging. So, if you feel that it's hard to engage in the virtual world, just know that on the other side of that laptop, there is a human who would like to talk to you. They're probably also lonely and miss student interaction.
- Alison Monahan: And they're being paid to talk to you, so you may as well take advantage.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, there's that, too. Yeah. I think another tough thing, depending on how well your professor is doing with this virtual classroom or a hybrid classroom is the class maybe less engaging. We have been running a virtual business for, what, nine years now? Almost a decade. Doing online curriculum that is engaging is not easy.
- Alison Monahan: It definitely is not.
- Lee Burgess: We have learned that the hard way. Go back and listen to some early podcast episodes. Fortunately, I think we've taken down a lot of our early course content.
- Alison Monahan: We've revamped it to be better.
- Lee Burgess: We've revamped, we have learned many valuable lessons, but this is not easy to do. A lot of people aren't comfortable in this format, and I think you're going to have to give your professors a bit of grace if they're struggling. But it may be hard to stay engaged if either they're hard to follow online, or they're boring. Who knows what the issues are, but I think that can be tough for people too.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, definitely. Even just having that Zoom environment of lots of people, and you can't quite tell necessarily who's going to be talking and... Yeah, I do a virtual cooking class with my friend who is in Italy at the moment. And that's



fun, but it's really hard to keep track of who's saying what. And particularly in a smaller group environment, I think that can be difficult on a screen.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it really can be. And sometimes it just depends on the day. I've had some group meetings that have gone amazing. I had one with our team today that was fairly collaborative and everybody was engaged and just having a great discussion. But I've also hosted plenty of meetings that are a disaster, that everyone looks exhausted and zoomed out. This is challenging; we're all trying to find our footing. So, I think being kind to yourself and knowing that if you're struggling engaging in class, it's not necessarily that something's wrong with you. However, you're going to still be required to know what's being discussed in class, so you've got to find a way around it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think you want to be paying attention as much as you can, and then anything you're not clear on, follow up in those virtual office hours or send your professor an email, because they are there to help you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think work/life balance issues... I don't know, I feel like we need a new category, like "work/life/mental health balance issues" because of the state of the world. I think everybody's life, in some ways, sometimes has become simpler, but oftentimes has become more complicated with the new restrictions around COVID, especially if you have children or if you are caring for someone in this really crazy time. But finding balance and focus is, I think, even more challenging than it used to be, considering we don't do anything. But I definitely feel busy and stressed out, and I can't go out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, there's so much less separation when you're working from home and studying from home and socializing from home. In California we're just coming off of literally a month of horrible smoke, where we basically, many days, have literally not been able to leave the house. So, I think for people who try to negotiate, "When does my studying stop? When does my work stop? When does my life start? What does my life look like? What do I do in the hours of day that I don't have to be working or studying, but I can't leave the house?" It's hard.

Lee Burgess: It's true, it's crazy. It's really hard. I did virtual yoga for the first time in three and a half weeks, and I swear I could hear my body cracking. It was really not okay. I was like, "I'm sorry, body. It's been a rough few weeks."

Alison Monahan: No, literally, I was trying to do something yesterday. I took a walk yesterday, because the air finally cleared. Thank goodness!

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Oh my gosh, magic.



- Alison Monahan: And I was like, "My leg doesn't work anymore. My hip is not functioning right now. I need to do something."
- Lee Burgess: I know. I'm supposed to do one of my exercise bike rides today, and we will see. For people outside of California, the air quality has just been to the point where I wouldn't exercise indoors with air filters because it was still really uncomfortable. But then you get off these habits, and then just restarting these self-care habits is so challenging in the best of circumstances. It really is. So, having a lot of grace with yourself, but also just making sure that when you are studying from home, taking classes from home, socializing from home, doing live stuff at home, that you do try and figure out how to create some sort of balance. I think you still need a study schedule, and if you're struggling either finding time to do things or finding that balance, then you need to talk to somebody and figure it out, because school's only going to get a little busier and a little more stressful as you march towards the end of the semester.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think in terms of talking to someone, I think, it's also unfortunately harder to have a study group experience. If people are generally used to two days a week, you cram yourself in the library room with your three friends and you guys study for eight straight hours – you can do things online, but definitely, it's going to be a different experience. And we have a [post about a virtual study group](#), and I think that's great, but it's just going to be a different experience.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, the Zoom fatigue is real. I think it's just how many hours can you video chat with people? I have a good group of girlfriends – we're all pretty busy and many of us talk to people during the day. And we were trying to have a Zoom happy hour, and we have nothing to say to each other by the end of the day. Everyone is so tired. It's like 9 o'clock and we're all just like, "What's going on?" And then it was just like, wah-wah. I think we hung up because we were just zoomed out. We had nothing left in the tank for the socializing piece.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it's hard to balance everything. And yeah, I think you just do your best. One day might be better, one week might be better, but I think just keeping these things in mind. If you realize at some point that you haven't left the house for a week and you haven't talked to anyone and you haven't really done anything but study – I don't think that's sustainable.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I agree. I think it's not. So, what should people be thinking about? It's October, you're like, "Okay, maybe I've midterms coming up." How do you even start this evaluation process to see how things are going?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think this is a great time to do two things. I think, one, you want to look backwards and really evaluate how are the basics going? Are you keeping up with your reading? Are you understanding the cases? Do you do some type of brief or something to capture this? And are you able to participate in class? Do



your class notes generally makes sense? All those kinds of things that are just the basic sort of day-to-day law school experience – how is that going? Are you getting enough out of it? And also, how long is it taking? Because I think at this point you're, say, six-ish weeks in at least, and it shouldn't be taking you insane amounts of time to do your reading. If it's taking you six hours to do your reading for one class, that is problematic. You don't have that much time. So I think I would look backwards and say, "How are things going? Are there things I need to change? Am I getting the most bang for my buck?" Maybe if you're doing extensive written briefs, this might be a good time to evaluate if that's really necessary or helpful, because the other thing you've got to do is look forward, and that gets into the deep work.

Lee Burgess: Right. Yeah, and I think that the deep work... This is where you have to really be honest with yourself about whether you're doing deep work or busy work. I had made this mistake myself as a 1L – it's very easy to just do busy work and think that it's deep work, because you haven't yet taken exams. But if you're preparing for midterms especially, you want to be setting aside time to really be wrestling with the material, making outlines, doing practice exams, all of that kind of stuff, really testing your knowledge and not just passively doing work, like re-typing your class notes or something along those lines.

Alison Monahan: Re-reading cases, that's my favorite.

Lee Burgess: Ah, re-reading cases. Reading multiple supplements – that's my other favorite one.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that one's always good. Speaking of supplements, I think this is also a good time to evaluate, do you need a supplement? And I know your professors will probably tell you you don't. I would probably not listen to them. And by a supplement, it could be a commercial outline, but it could also be something like an Examples & Explanations book, where you're really starting to engage with that material. I think those are so helpful, particularly the ones that we really like, like the [Torts](#) and the [Civ Pro](#) – they're fantastic, you should get them. But that's just not passive work. That's work where you're sitting down, you're getting a new explanation, you're engaging with the material, or you're checking yourself. I think that's highly valuable at this point.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that it is. And I think this also might be a situation where, depending on how your school is doing their library, it might be a little more challenging to even get access to supplements. So you might want to see what you could purchase that you could review on your iPad or on your computer. I think it's, unfortunately, maybe a little bit tougher to try out different supplements.



- Alison Monahan: I have heard certain schools and certain organizations, certain publishers are actually giving electronic access, so that's definitely something worth looking at. If you can save some cash not having to buy or rent some supplements, that's great. But really dig in with your librarians: "What do you guys have to offer? I can't come to the library now for these books. What do you have?" And oftentimes, I think they will have something.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's a good point. Alright, LRW also is something that usually happens in the fall that I think scares everybody, because you might be getting some early feedback, you might find that even if you were a good writer that you are humbled by your LRW feedback. You can't be demoralized by it, but you do also need to wrestle with that feedback and meet with your professor and figure out what went wrong, because it's possible that wasn't a graded assignment. Your graded assignment's coming down the pipe.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think that's also something, again, look forward and look backwards. You look back at what feedback have you gotten so far, really take that to heart. But also look forward at your scheduling, particularly. When do you have assignments coming up? Because that's one of those things that can absolutely eat up your time. And I think you have to be really diligent and rigorous about not letting legal writing totally take over your life right at the point at which you need to be studying for other things.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, no, it's so true. And I think that's a huge mistake, because oftentimes legal writing is a smaller number of units than even some of your larger doctrinal classes.
- Alison Monahan: Or ungraded.
- Lee Burgess: Or ungraded. But it becomes so big because it's work, and it's so much easier to work on those assignments than it is to work on abstract things like midterms or outlines or practice exams. So it's like a comfortable thing.
- Alison Monahan: It's like, "I'm going to get this totally perfect." Well, if it's 98% perfect it's probably perfect enough, and you should probably go do some case reading.
- Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. The 1L professors all know when the LRW assignments are due, and they get so angry when students are not prepared for class around times...
- Alison Monahan: Or don't show up.
- Lee Burgess: Or don't show up. Yeah, so don't do that, because they notice.
- Alison Monahan: No, I've heard of professors even basically telling people what's going to be on the exam on days that they knew a lot of people were going to miss just out of



spite, essentially. You should be in that class, particularly if it's virtual. There's really no excuse.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, yeah.

Alison Monahan: And I think the other thing is you absolutely cannot procrastinate on these LRW assignments. That's what kills people, is when they procrastinate and then they don't have time to do things that, frankly, in the whole scheme of things, are not that hard, like [Bluebook](#) citations. You got into law school, you can learn to do the Bluebook. It's just really sad when people have spent all of this time and energy with these arguments and digging into all the stuff, and then they screw up their citations and they get a C.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's so true. Yeah, well, you need a plan. You need a plan to get it all done.

Alison Monahan: Absolutely.

Lee Burgess: Absolutely. Alright, we've talked a little bit about what's happened to our mental and physical health during the last month of living in California. But guys, we've all got to really be serious about this, because not only, of course, is our own physical and immune health so critically important during this time, but you've also just got to be constantly checking in with yourself. And I think if your school is providing some sort of maybe virtual therapy or anything like that and it's free, I would just schedule a session.

Alison Monahan: I agree.

Lee Burgess: To check in.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Even if you think you're fine.

Lee Burgess: Even if you think you're fine. To be honest, I have a monthly therapy session booked with my therapist. Sometimes I don't go, but there's something about having it hanging out there on the calendar, to just have somebody ask you questions that maybe you're not going to ask yourself. There's just something out there. I think that we are all under such an immense amount of stress, and I'm sure everybody listening to this is also reading all the same articles you and I are sharing with each other on The New York Times and everything about what this amount of ongoing stress is doing to ourselves mentally. So, everybody's struggling, but you just want to make sure that you are coping. I think that's all we can really do right now, is cope.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think at this time in people's lives, it's a great time to talk with someone and get better coping skills, because you're entering a profession that



is highly stressful at the best of times, and these are skills that you're going to need for the rest of your life. I swear up and down that one of the best decisions I ever made was starting therapy my first year of law school, because it really allowed me to have that understanding and those tools that I've carried through forever. And it was literally life-changing, so I agree. I think take advantage of those resources even if you think, "Hey, relatively speaking, I'm doing pretty okay." Because the reality is, none of us are really doing that great right now.

Lee Burgess: No, these times are insane. They're absolutely insane. And I just think that if nothing else, just taking that pause to reflect on how you're doing. I think the other thing, because time is such a weird construct right now, we're not taking a lot of time to check in with ourselves, and many of us aren't even interacting with many of our friends who we're used to checking in with.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: And so, I think that any sort of standing meeting. And if you don't feel comfortable going to a therapist, maybe with a friend. Alison, you and I always have our check-ins on Monday, and sometimes I feel like we're just doing our own little decompression about what is going on in our lives.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. When we cancel, I'm like, "Oh, I don't have anybody to talk to this week."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I know, right? Monday is the day where we debrief the weekends and we look towards the week and we get our act together. So, I think that having any of that on your calendar is just part of managing mental health and mental function during this time. And physical health – this is a tough one, especially if you are somebody who's used to going to the gym or going to group classes and all that stuff. And if you've been saying, "I can't make myself do this at home. I can't, I can't, I can't" – it's just a great time to try. It's a great time to try.

Alison Monahan: Well, and also to look at options. Before the smoke apocalypse, I was actually doing an outdoor yoga class, and I was doing an outdoor boxing class, and that was great, I loved it. And then all that went away and now I've done nothing. But there may be choices, there may be options for you. It's totally possible some of these are through your school, too. I know that Columbia had a ton of gym classes we could sign up for, and I would have to imagine some of those maybe are still happening. I don't know. But hopefully some things are still happening while the weather isn't too terrible.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I know, right? You've got to get creative.

Alison Monahan: Or maybe you could just get an accountability partner, someone who is near you, and you guys can agree that you're going to go. It doesn't have to be a big



deal. It could literally just be a 30-minute walk. I think that would be amazing for most people's physical and mental health at this point.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it really would be. And I think one of the things I have learned is, really small goals. If you can't do 30 minutes, try 20 minutes.

Alison Monahan: Right. Try 10.

Lee Burgess: Or 10. I play this game with myself almost all the time. I think especially as over-achievers or people who are perfectionists – the personality type that goes to law school – it's like, "I can't work out if I don't have an hour to work out." It's like, you don't need to work out for an hour. You could take a 30-minute walk, 15-minute walk. Any walk is better than no walk.

Alison Monahan: Right. Or I have some kettle bells in my house, and sometimes I'm like, "I could just do five minutes of that. That would actually be not not beneficial."

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's funny. I got the Apple Watch, and I was doing pretty well in the moderate exercise setting before all the smoke stuff happened. I was basically consistently fulfilling my exercise goals for the day. So of course, being a Type A over-achiever, I decided the next step was obviously to up my goal. And so, at that point, I started not meeting the goal and getting demoralized and doing nothing.

Lee Burgess: Right. Totally true.

Alison Monahan: So I went back to the moderate goal and then I started exceeding it again and basically ended up at the same point I was trying to reach at the higher goal. It was eye-opening, I have to say.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it is really interesting, these kinds of games we have to play with ourselves. I've learned, for me, because I jumped on the [Peloton](#) bandwagon, and one of the things that the Peloton app does, which I think is kind of fascinating and a great user interface, is it makes it really hard to exit out of a class once you start one. It's not intuitive. So, I think it's great. It's like you just bite off your 15 minutes or your 20 minutes or your 30 minutes, but you're stuck.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: There's no quick "Exit" button. You have to click multiple things to get out.

Alison Monahan: Like, "Are you really sure you want to quit? Are you that lazy?"



Lee Burgess: Right, "You don't have 30 minutes out of a 24-hour day? Come on."

Alison Monahan: "Is there an emergency situation happening right now, Lee? I don't think so. Stay on the bike."

Lee Burgess: Totally. They've got meditation and yoga, and I've done some of their other classes. It's the same thing. It's like you're just in it. You just press the button and you're just in it. So, if you're one of those people who needs to hand yourself over to someone else... I do think that they're getting better and better at these virtual offerings to make it so you just sign up for your 30-minute slot, and then you're in it. You're in it for 30 minutes, and then that's how it is.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, all these companies are pretty good at motivating you at this point. Even if you kind of hate it and you know what they're doing, it still works.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. And now I feel all sorts of accountability that I have talked so much about my Peloton that I haven't seen in a few weeks. And it's blue skies, I am going to do that workout when I get back from the office today.

Alison Monahan: Nice.

Lee Burgess: I'm going to do it. My accountability partner, everybody is listening. Hopefully it will have been done by the time that...

Alison Monahan: We'll check in. We'll be like, "Lee, did you do this?"

Lee Burgess: Exactly, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It may seem silly that you have to spend this much mental energy to make yourself relatively healthy and stable in this world, but I think this is time worth spending, because the reality is, if you are in a better mental state, if you're in better physical health, you're going to be doing better in everything else. So, if you are sick and you are depressed and you're anxious, you're not going to really be able to succeed as a student because you've just put all these other problems in play.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. One more story. So my kids haven't been sleeping great the last few nights, so I've been very tired. And I was trying to memorize a phone number yesterday, because my "Copy and Paste" on my phone wouldn't work. And I read a phone number and then I needed to text somebody. Oh my gosh, I could not remember the phone number to save my life. I kept flopping the last two numbers. It was taking me forever. I was tired, I was flustered, and it was just such a great example of, I had to take a moment where I was like, "My brain is not functioning correctly, and I just have to figure out how to get to the other



side of this." And it was such an interesting reminder of, we can only function as well as our bodies and our minds are doing at that moment, so we have to do whatever we can. So, if anyone wants to tell me how to make my kids sleep more, that'd be amazing. I can only control them so much, but I can control the things I can control, so that's all I can do.

Alison Monahan: Right. And you can make sure you have paper to write down the number.

Lee Burgess: Right, I know. I didn't have a pen in my purse, I didn't have a piece of paper. I have like 16 masks, but I don't have a pen and a paper.

Alison Monahan: Well, at least you have those. Well, I think a lot of it is just mental overhead of making sure you have all these... Just to leave the house, it's not like you just leave the house these days. You've got mental overhead for everything you're doing, and that mental overhead is taking away from things like your working memory. That's just the basics of how the brain works – you only have so much capacity.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, absolutely. If you are finding that your school is not able to provide you with these types of resources to help you manage your time, figure out how to get feedback from your professors, all that stuff – our tutors are working with students to come up with these solutions. And your school may still be figuring out how to offer things like academic support virtually, so ask the school. I think this is a good time, this October timeframe, if you're feeling lost, to go get those resources, because you don't want to try and reach out in November as you're marching towards finals. You can get help, and that's great, but this is a magic time to get help.

Alison Monahan: Right, I think this is a time where you still have enough time to really not be in a crazy, frazzled state when you're preparing for exams. But the time is rapidly getting shorter, so yeah. This is the perfect time to look at, what support do you need that you don't have? Are there people that you need help from? Are there things like old exams that you don't have access to? What if your professor doesn't have these on file? This is the time to really be digging into that, because all this other stuff is going to happen really quickly.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, a lot of people ask in October what their outlining goals should be. Are they supposed to be outlining, are they supposed to be practicing? And the answer is "Yes". Yes, you should.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you've covered enough material at this point, you're not going back to it. Figure out what you've covered, look at your syllabus, you've got some topics. You should start outlining those topics or making flow charts or doing whatever it is that makes sense to you. And then you should start doing some practice



hypos employing those topics, because that's how you're going to learn to take these exams.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Especially if you do not have midterms, you need to basically make your own midterms, so you don't wait until the end of the semester to start practicing this early material.

Alison Monahan: Well, and I think you need to figure out some way to get feedback, because the reality is, you don't know what you're doing. So, you might think that you've done an amazing job and that it's pretty close to the sample answer, or you might not even have a sample answer, but you need to confirm that with someone.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's very true. And if your prof doesn't have stuff on file, I think it's a good time to see if your school has other professors' practice exams for a similar class. So if you have a new Contracts professor, it's possible that their exam might look a lot like the other Contracts professors' exams, because they're probably going to be covering similar material. You can use bar questions, you can use supplements, but you're going to still need to practice. You don't get to just say, "I can't do practice exams because I don't have my old professor's questions."

Alison Monahan: Right. One thing I think you have to keep in mind too is, it's totally possible that the format of your exam is going to look quite different from exams that even a professor who's taught for 20 years has given before. If you're doing virtual school, you're probably not going to have an in-class, closed book exam this semester, so you've really got to think through what changes might they make to be able to curve an exam that is online, take-home, open book, instead of three hours in-class.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And if they haven't shared any information with you yet about the exam in-class, that's a great icebreaker to go to office hours about. They would rather talk to you about the format of the exam now than they would in November. They're going to get cranky about people who flood their office hours at the end with all these very specific questions, but they are pleased when people come early to ask these questions, because then you get credit for thinking ahead.

Alison Monahan: Right. And if they tell you they haven't decided, then I think that at some point becomes cause for concern.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true. So basically, I think the moral of the story is, hey, it's October, finals aren't that far away. Time to evaluate what you're doing and talk to your professors.



Alison Monahan: Right. And get the help that you need to make sure that you're going to be prepared for these exams that are going to be in a format that you've probably not ever really taken before. And of course, it has most of your grade riding on it. Not to frighten anyone.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, because it's strange times, so why wouldn't this be strange too?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Alright, well, with that, I think we are out of time. Any final thoughts you want to share on this?

Lee Burgess: I think just have a little grace for yourself and for everyone else. I think one of the things I'm really trying to work on is giving everybody more chances before I get frustrated than I used to. It's possible I'm not the most patient person in the world, and so oftentimes, I'm trying to double my patience for everything. It's like, if somebody doesn't respond to me, instead of getting mad, I just double my patience. I just follow up one more time. And so, I think just having grace with your professors who are probably working in an environment they're not particularly comfortable with, grace for your friends who may be slow to respond. Just try and have a little bit of grace, grace for yourself. No one is performing at their best in this situation, and so just taking that extra beat, I think, can make things run a little smoother. I'm feeling much better now that I just give everyone more chances than I used to, to do everything right, including myself.

Alison Monahan: Well, I think that's a great takeaway. And probably that makes you take everything less personally.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's true too.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's not that they ignored you because they hate you. They were just busy.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: It's probably a better way to get through life, let's face it. Alright, well, 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, and we'll talk soon!



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