



- Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are sharing our top 10 things to consider when preparing for your first set of law school final exams. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on your favorite listening app, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.
- Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Well, it's that time of year again – time for law students to really start preparing for finals. If you are a 1L, this is going to be your first final exam season in law school, and this can definitely be a very overwhelming time. Your mind might be swirling with questions about how to fit in more study time, what are you supposed to be doing to study? How will you even know if you're ready for exams? Don't worry, we can help. Here are 10 things to think about when planning out these final weeks of the first semester. Alright, Lee, what's up first?
- Lee Burgess: Alright. Well, my first thing that I think everyone needs to do is make a calendar. And this is if you're a 1L, 2L, 3L, any L, you should make a calendar. Because I am surprised at how many students we talk to and one of our first questions when we're talking about law school tutoring is, "When are your exams?" And every now and then we get quite a number of students who say, "I don't know."
- Alison Monahan: "In a few weeks."
- Lee Burgess: "I think around December, in a few weeks, first couple weeks." I'm like, "What order are they in?" I mean, there are a lot of questions.
- Alison Monahan: How many days do you have between them?
- Lee Burgess: How many days? Yeah. And it is actually really important as you march closer to exam time to know exactly when those exams are, because there needs to be some strategy given how they're laid out. So, if you don't know, find out and then put it on your calendar. You can put it on an electronic calendar, you can put it on paper calendar. It just has to be on a calendar.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And you want to basically put all of your dates, and then you really want to work backwards to the exact present moment you are in. So, look at how much time you have, how are you going to get through these classes to make sure that you've done your [outlines](#) and study aids and studied sufficiently for all of them? Because the reality is, you may be more comfortable in some



classes than others for whatever reason. It might be that you liked the professor better, or you've kept up with the reading, or you've just finished your outline. Whatever it is, you need to make sure, "Where am I, and how much time realistically is each of these classes going to require out of the time I have left?" And unfortunately, you might want to start with the subject that you hate the most, because that might be where you're weakest.

**Lee Burgess:** Yeah, those two things usually correlate, which is kind of a bummer. And it can be hard to start feeling like you're really leaning into studying for finals. It's a little anxiety inducing, it can feel overwhelming. And I think often, students want to start with the material that they're most comfortable with, because it makes you feel good, it makes you feel smart, and it's very validating. But unfortunately, that's not where the magic happens, because the magic happens when you study the stuff that you don't know and that makes you feel a bit uncomfortable. So, you've got to start with the stuff that makes you the most anxious, because that's the stuff you need to work on the most.

**Alison Monahan:** Yeah. And I think it's important to just be realistic about where you are in each class, and also how much time you have between classes. If you have a final exam and then you have three or four days before the next one, that is a ton of time in terms of exam prep. So, you probably don't want to spend all of your time in November working on just that second or third class. Don't ignore them, but at the same time realize you actually have a lot of time between certain exams, and other ones you don't. You may have one exam one day and then turn around and have another exam the next day. You really can't rely on doing that much that night beforehand, because you're going to be burned out from your first test. So just be realistic, divide your time up in a way that kind of makes sense, but definitely get this stuff on the calendar.

**Lee Burgess:** Alright. So once you have that calendar, the second thing you need to do is to make sure that you're actually outlining.

**Alison Monahan:** Right.

**Lee Burgess:** Doing the heavy lifting of the outlining. And if you haven't started outlining, it's time.

**Alison Monahan:** Right. And when we say "outline", we don't necessarily mean you have to have a 100-page document you might hear about. We have tons of podcasts on this, I'm sure we can link to them. But an outline for you might be a flowchart or some other type of study aid. But whatever it is, you need to make it yours. You can't just take someone else's outline and put your name on it. It's really this process of making sense of the material and coming to some understanding that you can actually apply, and if you have closed-book exams, actually memorize.



- Lee Burgess: And if you're short on time, make sure your outlines don't get too incredibly long, especially if you have more complete or longer... I guess "complete" is probably the wrong word, but longer outlines maybe that were from an outline bank from someone else who had the professor. The materials that you make really should be concise and helpful based on the structure of your exam. We've also done podcasts we can link to about the difference between [open-book tests](#) and [closed-book tests](#), your materials might be slightly different. But what you really don't want to do is find that you're just doing mountains and mountains of busy work making these materials and not really internalizing everything. You need to be focused on what is going to make it learnable, memorizable, and able to execute on the test. Having the longest outline doesn't win you any prizes.
- Alison Monahan: No. And I think particularly in the first year, there is going to be this temptation to fill your outline with case briefs, which we've also talked about a number of times. But keep in mind, the outline is really about the law. It is about the elements of the law, it needs to be focused, it needs to be concise. And yes, cases may have value, but if you find yourself typing out the facts of a case into your outline, you need to take a step back because that is not going to help you on a final.
- Lee Burgess: No. The extent of the facts could be "the case with the blue car".
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: That's a good factual description.
- Alison Monahan: "The one about the hospital."
- Lee Burgess: "The one about the hospital".
- Alison Monahan: That's it. Nothing else is going to be useful, because you need something that potentially triggers your mind to actually talk about what happened in that case in context of something else that is different. Not like, "And then Dr. Smith was working on the hospital and he was doing this and that. " No one cares about Dr. Smith.
- Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. It's very funny, I was working on putting together materials for an exam seminar that you and I are putting on in a few weeks, and I was going back through my Criminal Law textbook that still lives on my shelf. And I was flipping through cases and that's how I remembered cases, with these little taglines. I mean, and it's been a few years since I've been in law school at this point, but I'm like, "Oh, that's the case where the husband put his wife in a barrel." And I'm like, "How do I even remember that?"



- Alison Monahan: Because you were like, "That was memorable." Memorable facts.
- Lee Burgess: That one's memorable. And so, these little taglines that you make can really go into your memory and be triggering for you. So, don't discount them.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, or a little diagram or little picture that I would do. I'm sure if I looked at my 1L Torts flashcards with my little drawing... I can even envision one right now of somebody in the hospital room, I'm sure it would take me about two seconds of refreshment to be like, "Oh, right, that's what that case is about."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, our third tip is to make sure you find a balance between studying and classwork. And within this balance, you need to find time to do deep work, which is what we really call the heavy lifting in the studying. And I think this is a big challenge for almost all 1Ls, is to start to make this transition.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely, because you've been so focused on getting your reading done and all that, and that's probably taken up most of your time. But now you really have to start to split that focus. So that might mean getting more efficient with your class prep, it might mean shorter briefs or no briefs or book briefs instead of a written brief, because you need to start blocking out actual timeframes of, generally I would say four to five hours, to start doing this deeper work of really learning the material, making sense of it, outlining, working on the application. And that sort of thing really can't happen in one to two-hour chunks, typically. That's great for reviewing and maybe doing some [practice](#), but when you're really starting to think about, "How does this whole course fit together?" – that's going to take at least probably half a day to even start to get any headway on.
- Lee Burgess: Well, yeah. It just takes a long time to set up your study area in the library. Sometimes maybe you have printouts of things, you've got supplements, you've got your laptop, you've got your water. And I would always be interested when people would say, "I've only got an hour to go do this." I'm like, "Sometimes you can spend five to 10 minutes just getting everything situated, that's why you need these longer periods of time." And then I think it's also important to know though, we don't recommend sitting in one spot and not moving for four to five hours.
- Alison Monahan: No.
- Lee Burgess: You should take breaks, you should stand up, you should stretch. You can do a lap around the library to break it out. But the focus on what you're doing needs to be for four to five hours.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I remember I was studying with a friend of mine once, and he was over at my house and he was one of those people who just had amazing focus. He



literally could just sit in the living room, do work, maybe take an occasional water break or whatever. And he just sat there the whole afternoon, and I on the other hand would look at something and then I would get up and maybe I'd go into the kitchen and I'd make something. And then I'd come back and then I'd eat something and then maybe make another... And finally he was just like, "What are you doing?" I was like, "This is just the way my process works. I need to read something, look at it, think about it, and then maybe I go make cookies for 10 minutes and then I come back." He's like, "This is insanity, but whatever works for you."

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Well, once you have been starting to do this deep work – and really this is kind of included in the deep work – our next tip is to start focusing on doing practice, a little more practice, and then even more practice, because the practice is really the key to getting ready for exams.

Alison Monahan: It is. And sometimes it's really funny, we talk to people who failed the bar exam who you think would know better by this time. And I ask them, "Well, how many practice exams would you say you did in the average day?" And the answer to that should typically be more than one. And they're like, "Well, I think I was probably doing more like one a week." I'm like, "Mm, that's probably why you failed the bar."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's so true.

Alison Monahan: You have to practice doing what you're going to be doing – this is really the key. So, if you have multiple choice questions, you want to be doing multiple choice questions. If you have hypos, you want to be doing hypos. And you want to do short ones and then kind of work up to the longer ones. And you can use things your professor has given you. If your professor hasn't given you a lot, you're going to have to look elsewhere. Maybe bar questions are good if it's a bar class, because they tend to be pretty focused. Or even supplements, like your commercial outlines often have questions and answers, you've got things like the Examples & Explanations. But whatever it is, even if you write them with your [study group](#), which we've talked about before – you need to be doing actual application in order to make sure that you know how to do that particular skill.

Lee Burgess: Yes. And I think there's this idea that first years can get a little bit sucked into, which is, "I've got to save all my practice questions for my professor till the end."

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah. I remember thinking, "Oh, I can't look at them yet." It's like, "No, I should probably have looked at them way sooner."



- Lee Burgess: Right. I think you need to at least look at them sooner. If you have a number of them, you can even study off of one, maybe save one or two as you get closer. But you really want to study off of them. It's not just for the practice of taking the exam; it's really this valuable information about how your professor is going to test this material. And if you don't appreciate what the test looks like, it's very hard to prepare for that test. Sometimes professors can even give you magical model answers, or even answers that they wrote themselves. You should be studying off of those, and then looking for extra questions that somewhat mimic their style. But don't save all those practice exams until the end. It's really a waste of some valuable information.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And I think particularly if you have a sample answer that's super interesting. If they've given you the best student answer from that year, how did this person structure the law? How did they do their analysis? This is something your professor obviously found was compelling, so maybe you want to do something kind of similar. But yeah, I think this idea of, "Oh, I can't look at any of them until the last week" is not the greatest idea. Yeah, definitely keep a couple to surprise yourself with, but other than that you really want to be breaking these things down, like how do they ask questions? Are they long, are they short, what do they look like, what do they address? All these types of things are just really going to help you understand and not be surprised when you get their exam in that classroom to feel like, "Oh my gosh, like I've never seen something like this before."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Once you have done some practice, then our next tip is that you need to go get feedback on that practice. Now, speaking of practice exams from your professor, it's possible they will not give you feedback on practice exams, depending on the professor. You can always ask.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: But they may not do that. But they may give feedback on other hypos that they have given during class, or you could take your midterm back to them with a rewritten section and ask for more feedback. But if your professor will give you feedback on something, you should get feedback from your professor because that's really the gold standard. They're grading your test. So if you can get feedback, you should try and get it as soon as you can.
- Alison Monahan: And that might be something to go approach them about in office hours, particularly if they've given a midterm or something like that and you want to dive into it a little more. Or even if there are things they've talked about in class you don't quite understand, or they've given you sample questions. Like you said, not every professor will actually do that, but a lot of them if you go to office hours, are willing to at least chit chat with you about how they might approach this.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. A lot of schools have TAs or tutors assigned to the class. You and I were both in these roles at our various law schools, and TA feedback is helpful, but prof feedback is better.
- Alison Monahan: Definitely.
- Lee Burgess: So, if you can go to your professor and if they will give you feedback, that is still going to be the gold standard, and you want to try and get that feedback. If you can't get feedback from your professor, TA feedback is better than no feedback. So, I think that's really worth seeing if they will be able to help you. But it's also important to remember that TAs are also law students that have their own final exams. So if you want to get help from a TA, you probably need to do it before they're deep into studying for their own exams.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. And the reality is, they don't have a ton of time to be giving you individual comments on your essays, but they might be willing to have a group session or something and help people out. I think TAs typically do what they can, but the reality is they have a lot of stuff going on as well.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: You might also have some options in your academic support office, or your school might have a peer tutoring program. I mean, hopefully you already have been hooked up with this if you want help. I think the takeaway here is try to get all this stuff set up sooner rather than later in the semester. But if you do have those options, definitely take advantage of trying to get whatever support you can get.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then of course we have our [tutoring program](#). Our tutors will be able to give feedback to students as well. And so, that's another option that you can look into if you are not getting the support that you need from the resources at your school. You pay a lot to go to that school, you should always get all the help you can get from the school. But oftentimes it's not able to meet your needs, and then it can be really great to go get another type of an expert to weigh in.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because I think ideally you just want someone. Worst case, maybe it's your study group partner, but then it's a little bit of the blind leading the blind. But somebody to just sort of look at this and say, "Okay, does this make sense? Are there things you could be doing better?" Because nobody is born knowing how to write a law school exam.
- Lee Burgess: Nope. Alright, our next tip is about study groups, which you just mentioned.



Alison Monahan: Ah, the study group.

Lee Burgess: I know, the study group. You've just got to be smart about the study group. If they're not working for you, you need to lay down the pen and walk out. You have to leave.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Don't go back. You really have to set your boundaries about what is working for you and what's not working for you. Another thing that was just mentioned to me by a student that was talking to me on the phone was that she felt that people in her study group were really trying to play mind games about not wanting to admit that they were struggling. So, she was bringing questions to the study group and everyone's like, "Oh, I understand that. I don't understand why you're so confused. It's not that hard." And she's like, "It's a hyper competitive law school, but am I the only person who doesn't get it?" And I was like, "No, I think they're just trying to play you, but maybe those people shouldn't be your study partners."

Alison Monahan: Right. I feel like in the best case scenario... And I was not really a study group person, I'll be honest. But the best case scenario, the study group is kind of a safe space where you can bring those questions and talk about your concerns. And obviously that can kind of also spiral into the doom spiral, so I think you've got to have a balance. But people I know who had successful study groups, they really did rely on each other and it was kind of "them against the world" sort of thing. But if your study group itself is being weird and competitive, you've got to get out of that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, you've got to walk away, it's not worth it. So, just keep asking yourself if the time that you're spending with your study group is moving you towards your goals. Just be honest with yourself.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think the other thing that people sometimes don't realize when they're in their first semester is, unfortunately, taking an exam is not a group effort, typically. So, sometimes people can get a little overconfident if you do a lot of hypos with your study group and collectively you guys come up with a really fantastic answer, but unfortunately on the exam, it's just going to be you. So, you need to make sure that you are also taking that time to sit down by yourself and work through something and make sure you can do this, because you're not going to have those people in the room with you, unfortunately.

Lee Burgess: Well, they might be in the room, but they're not going to be able to help you.

Alison Monahan: Right. They're not going to be in a group with you. You're going to be competing with them, not collaborating.





- Lee Burgess: Not collaborating. Our next tip is to stay healthy, which seems like a no-brainer, but the tough thing about winter final exams is they are in cold and flu season. And now I think it's cold, flu, and COVID season.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, fun times.
- Lee Burgess: Fun times. The problem is, it's really hard to study for finals if you or someone else in your home is really sick. And so, you have to try and take care of yourself and avoid illnesses. And I would probably say as you march closer to exams, try not to get COVID, because that can knock you down for weeks, even if you don't get a terribly bad case or you have to quarantine from other people. It would just be very complicated to study for finals while struggling with COVID.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think this is the case where maybe you start avoiding... I always avoided the law library during finals, but I think there's even more of an argument to avoid the crowded law library during finals in this type of situation.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Obviously, everybody has their own preferences and things they like to do to study, but I think you do want to be kind of cognizant of where you can reduce your risk of getting really sick, and maybe not going out to a crowded bar or something for that week or two around finals.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think it's just a tough reality. Everybody used to talk about this stuff, but I think we're now just going to have to talk about it more than we were.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's just a weird bifurcated reality, I feel like we're living in.
- Lee Burgess: It is, it is. But it's better than it was, so.
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Number eight is, please don't stop paying attention in class.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, this is a good one.
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. As it turns out, professors like to test on the last few weeks of material. Even the last day's material has shown up on exams.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.
- Lee Burgess: Anything is fair game.



- Alison Monahan: Well, because why do you think they're trying to cover that last topic?
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: They already wrote the exam, they need to get it out there.
- Lee Burgess: Totally. Or in some classes – I think Torts is a great example because most 1Ls take Torts – they end the semester with products liability.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Almost always. And products is the most difficult Torts concept, in my opinion.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah, definitely.
- Lee Burgess: Much more complicated than negligence or intentional torts. But they always cover it in one or two weeks at the end of the semester, and it is almost always on every final exam because it gets the curve. People mess those questions up, they're really painful.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think also professors know that people are maybe not doing as much of the reading, maybe you're skipping class, and they don't really like that. So, they definitely, I feel like they want to reward those people who actually keep showing up and keep participating and keep doing their reading with at least part of a question, maybe a whole question that is on that material that they have covered in the last few days of class. Obviously, you don't want to forget about the material from the start of the semester, but you also don't want to forget the stuff that maybe you think they're rushing through, which they probably are because they're trying to cover stuff at the last minute. you may have make-up classes and things like that that you have to go to. And the other thing I would say is you really want to pay attention to those final exam sessions, if your professor does one. Sometimes people feel like they're so busy, they can't go to that. I'm like, "Are you insane?" This is when they're basically telling you what they're doing on the test, to the extent they're doing that at all.
- Lee Burgess: Basically, if your professor is moving their mouth in a classroom setting, you must be there. And even if you for some reason cannot do the reading for class, go to class, take notes. I have heard students say, "Well, it's not a good use of my time to go to class if I didn't do the reading." Yes, it is.
- Alison Monahan: Are you kidding me?
- Lee Burgess: It is still a great use of your time, you need to get those notes. And getting notes from somebody else, it's just not the same. We all had to miss class for whatever reason, and the notes don't mean as much to you. They're good to



have, but they don't mean as much as sitting through class and following the lecture.

Alison Monahan: Right. If you haven't done the reading, it's almost more important to go to class because at least you're learning a lot more at that point because you're starting from zero.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's very true.

Alison Monahan: It's not comfortable because you're sitting there going, "Oh my God, don't call on me, don't call on me, don't call on me."

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. We've all been there.

Alison Monahan: Maybe you can Zoom or something.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, you never know. Alright, number nine is, make sure you spend a little time planning and evaluating your Thanksgiving plans.

Alison Monahan: So tricky.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, which is very tricky. You also might have to make some last minute decisions based on how things are going. And I think a little bit goes back to trying to stay healthy and take care of yourself, is to evaluate what possible travel plans mean for staying healthy, making sure you stay rested. And if you are going to travel, how can you keep up with your studies, because you probably have final exams within the next week or so after Thanksgiving.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I feel like Thanksgiving is really when everything kind of hits the fan, because you've got oftentimes pressure from outside forces saying, "Well, what do you mean you can't come to Thanksgiving dinner like you always come?" Or like, "Are you kidding? Of course you can fly across the country, it's no problem." That's probably maybe not something that you necessarily want to do. But at the same time, I can see when people being like, "I'll be so lonely and sad if I'm just sitting in my laptop room working away and everybody else is having Thanksgiving." I don't know, I think this one's a hard one.

Lee Burgess: I think you really just have to sit down and think through it, and then be good with your choice. I think you just need to evaluate where you are, how much time you need to finish studying to prepare for those exams, what does the travel look like? I went to law school within driving distance from my family home, so it wasn't that unheard of for me to just get in the car and drive three and a half hours, because I had a lot of control over that. I wasn't going to get stuck in a snowstorm, I wasn't going to have my flight cancelled. It was very different than somebody trying to take on time zone changes or airports. And



then if you're trying to protect yourself from getting sick, time changes, airports... Although I feel like I know a lot more about airplane ventilation that I used to, but still, it's a high contact activity with a lot of different people, and you just have to make sure that you're okay and really owning whatever choice you make.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I remember I went with my law school roommate who was from Philadelphia, and we were in New York, so we took the train down and we stayed with her family for a couple of days. But that was fine, because for me, I didn't have a lot of social pressure. I went to Thanksgiving dinner and we would do something during the day or go to dinner or whatever. But basically they kind of left us alone to study and it worked out fine, but I don't think I wouldn't have necessarily flown across the country to spend four days with my family or something.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, and we're already to number 10.

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.

Lee Burgess: I know, what an efficient list. It's almost like I wrote it. The thing I want you to keep in mind, and I think this is really just an overarching thing, is that final exam sittings, it's a marathon, not a sprint. You can't pull all-nighters like maybe you did when you were in undergrad, and completely burn yourself out early in the process. You will pay for that burnout later on that. Don't teach yourself that lesson. Just let me save you from that experience.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, people have to really adjust their mindset to, "This is something that I'm going to be doing for weeks at a time, not for just days at a time." You may have a study week, a reading week, you may not, but even if you just have three or four exams, those are going to be spread out probably over at least a week. And so, yeah, if you start trying to pull all-nighters for exam one, and then suddenly you're three days into the process and you haven't slept – that's just not going to go well.

Lee Burgess: No. And for most of us, we aren't as young when we go to law school as we were in undergrad, and your body also cannot recover from stuff like that like it used to. Even if you're just a few years down the road, it's not the same it used to be.

Alison Monahan: Right. And the sleep thing is a real problem. My first semester exams, I kind of responsibly allocated eight hours of sleep every night, but then I had so much stuff going through my head every night that I'd lay down and I'd be awake for three or four hours. And so, after a couple of weeks of sleeping four hours a night, it is not a good scene. So, I think that's just something to really think about and figure out what you might do if that starts to happen to you.



- Lee Burgess: Yes. Cognitive decline with sleep deprivation is a very real thing.
- Alison Monahan: No, I literally ended up clinically depressed by the end of it.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. The other thing you want to consider is to diligently study every day, get sleep, move to the next class, and just be so methodical. You want to think about how they make marathon training schedules. They have long runs, they have short runs, they have breaks, they have different activities. But they definitely don't say, "Run 24 miles five days a week."
- Alison Monahan: Your body would break down.
- Lee Burgess: Your body would completely break down. So, you want to build a study schedule that is very deliberate and gives you some flexibility to make sure that you are taking care of yourself, that you're going on walks, that you're doing whatever you need to do for self-care, because burnout is a real issue. You will not be able to perform at your best if you are incredibly burned out. It is just a fact.
- Alison Monahan: If you arrive at the exam and you're haggard, you haven't slept, you're kind of sick, you haven't really eaten anything but pizza for four weeks – that's just not going to be your optimal performance. You want to go in well-rested, well-fed, hopefully feeling confident. But it's hard to do because obviously there's this temptation of, "I have to do more, I have to do more, I have to do more." But I think doing the right stuff is more important than just doing more volume.
- Lee Burgess: I agree. And you don't get any points for number of hours of studying.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Misery doesn't get you points, unfortunately.
- Lee Burgess: No, it doesn't. Usually it just leads to burnout, which then makes it harder to focus and retain information and perform at our best. If your body is in a "fight or flight" mode continuously and thinks that you are being chased by lions all the time, you cannot memorize information or learn or internalize information in that state. So, you have to take care of yourself to make sure that you are going to be able to even get anything from the work that you're doing.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think you can also plan something fun to celebrate after you're done, something you can look forward to, even if it's just something like going out to your favorite cafe and getting a really fancy hot chocolate or something. It doesn't have to be taking a trip to Tahiti.
- Lee Burgess: No.



- Alison Monahan: Just something that you can sort of look forward to, I think can be really motivating, because you are going to be in the depths of winter and the weather's probably going to be miserable a lot of places. You want something on the other side of this that you can go towards.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I agree. And the other thing I did for all of my final exam seasons is I always binge watched some show that I found very calming, that I could look forward to in the evening to wind down. That was kind of one of my things.
- Alison Monahan: That's a good idea.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And don't make it something super stressful. Maybe it's even something you've seen before, but just to be like, "Now it's my time to watch Bridgerton again", or whatever it is that makes you... All of the Star Wars cartoons that they have made now, whatever it might be. But just to be like, "This is my downtime and I look forward to it to kind of bookend my day." It can be kind of a nice ritual.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, my roommates and I would make ourselves custom boxes of See's Candy that I would order for everyone, and so that was our treat when we finished a long study session. It's like, "Oh, I get to have one of my candy pieces that I picked out for myself." We each got one and then we got a guest box for our friends coming over, so we didn't have to share.
- Lee Burgess: I like that. You're like, "We're going to be so generous. Hands off my candy."
- Alison Monahan: You're like, "You can pick any one in this box, not that other box."
- Lee Burgess: Well, as we're running out of time, do you have any final thoughts for folks going into finals?
- Alison Monahan: No, I think other than just acknowledge this is probably going to be a challenging time and you just do what you can, and I think just try to stay focused on what's actually going to move the needle, so things like doing practice, reviewing materials you're uncertain of. If you have closed-book exams, really memorizing things. And try to block out all the noise, because there's so much talk and everybody is doing this and that. And you're on your own path, so do what you need to do.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a good point. Yeah, that's a good one. That should have been on my list – block out the noise. Maybe that's number 10.5. Don't listen at the people.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. That's your bonus tip if you listened this far.



Lee Burgess: That's your bonus tip. Yeah, don't become part of the chaos, the anxiety chaos. That's another...

Alison Monahan: Stay out of the law library.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, stay out of the law library. Well, with that, we're 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'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at [lee@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:lee@lawschooltoolbox.com) or [alison@lawschooltoobox.com](mailto:alison@lawschooltoobox.com). Or you can always contact us via our [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon! Good luck with your first final exams!

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