



Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're excited to have Jessica Elefante – the author of [\*Raising Hell, Living Well: Freedom from Influence in a World Where Everyone Wants Something from You\*](#) – on the podcast to discuss influence, life choices, and how to manage our digital lives. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are excited to have Jessica Elefante joining us on the podcast. Jessica is the author of *Raising Hell, Living Well: Freedom from Influence in a World Where Everyone Wants Something from You*. And I just finished listening to this book, because as a busy mom, that is really how I consume books, unfortunately. And I thought it was so interesting that I wanted to have her join us on the podcast, and she said "Yes". So thanks, Jessica, for taking the time today to join us.

Jessica Elefante: Oh my God, of course. I'm so happy that you found the book and I'm really excited to be here.

Lee Burgess: Yes. Well, I love having non-lawyers on the podcast.

Jessica Elefante: I think I am definitely a non-lawyer in every way.

Lee Burgess: I think you are, yes. But so many of the messages in this book, I felt were incredibly important to this audience. But to get us started, can you just share a bit more about yourself and how you came to work on the topic of this book?

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, of course. So, I guess the most important thing to know is that my background is in marketing and brand strategy, and that wasn't really an intentional choice. I thought I was going to be an artist and a photographer and a writer, but back when I was younger and wanted this nice apartment in New York City, I had to do something to pay the bills. And so, I kind of fell face first into this very corporate career, when at heart, I was more like a nonconformist. And that career was right before brands and media companies really started to



understand that this social media and tech industry wasn't going anywhere, and they had to hop on or be left behind. And so, I fell face first into this place, this sort of nexus of before and after. And because of my timing and my gift of storytelling and my creative brain, I had a lot of success there. And I say "success" in how we think of success currently in American culture. I made a lot of money, I won a bunch of awards, I had the status of the big fancy title, things like that. But the reality was that all these things that I was doing were making me unwell, and probably, definitely also making society unwell, which I don't want to give spoilers in the book. And so, when I decided to leave that behind, I had thought that the problem was really my use of technology and the digital world. But upon further review, after many, many years – almost a decade later – I discovered this thing sitting at the other end of it, where tech and digital – while I do believe it's more than just a tool that we use; it's definitely a full culture and environment – it was really, in this instance, just a tool for this much larger thing that I was witnessing, which was what I call the "culture of influence", which is to say that all day, every day, we are being influenced, persuaded, pushed, pulled, having our behaviors modified to benefit oftentimes somebody else or another entity besides our own self. And so, when I started to peel back the layers of that onion and see that at the core of everything was this idea that until we're aware of all the influences coming after us, we can never actually do what is true for us. That's where this book manifested. And so, it's a really long-winded answer to my background and how this book came to be, but it was through lived experience and research, and many wrong turns, I guess.

Lee Burgess:

And I thought what was interesting when I started to consume the book was that your definition of "influence" was much broader than I think we often talk about today. I think a lot of us appreciate that we're getting inundated with images or feedback through social media, or what we're supposed to look like or how we're supposed to parent and all of that stuff. But I really thought it was interesting that you were kind of saying influence is very broad – relating back to where you grew up, what information you're consuming, who you surround yourself with and all of those things. And I thought that that broad picture of influence was unique and was really what frames all of our important decisions – if and when you go to school, where you go to school, the jobs that you might want to take, and this idea of what success means to you. So, could you share a little with our listeners about some of the lessons around influences and how you recommend folks who are on the cusp of a new career path – folks listening to this podcast are usually just embarking on law school – should think about what is influencing their next decisions moving forward?



Jessica Elefante:

Of course. So, in the book I have at the end of each chapter this sort of device, if you will, called "The Folklore, The Folktale, and The Folk Rebellion". And it's sort of like the status quo myths that we all just accept as fact, because it is just a part of culture, and we've been breathing it in like air without even realizing it. The idea that you must go to college is a perfect example of that, right? It is just assumed, or at least it was where I grew up, that everyone after high school went to college. And while it is very important for certain career paths, like being a lawyer, maybe it shouldn't be the baseline entry point assumption for everybody. And so, I just like to have people start to think about what are those myths that we accept as fact, and then based off of them, what is the story that we tell ourselves, or society tells us, and then the one we tell ourselves? And so, when I look back to why I burnt out, being this sort of, in the girl boss generation, killing myself, trying to win these awards and be put on stages – I was able to finally, after much looking at my values, looking at my influences of my upbringing, see that a lot of this probably stemmed both from the culture I existed within the time, and where I grew up, the beliefs of the town that I was raised in. And so, when you think about anything that you're doing, or anything you're about to do or embark on, the first very obvious thing is to just think, "Why am I doing this?" And if you can really, truly, genuinely answer that... And it's not because somebody else is doing it or because it's expected of you or it's because you think it's what's supposed to happen, but it's maybe because it's something you want to do. Or maybe it's not something you want to do, but you realize you're doing it to avoid something else. So, it's just becoming hyper, hyper aware of our own motivations, and often those motivations are based on others' motivations, outside of ourselves. Maybe some of this is obvious to people, but when I was 18 years old – and again at 24, and again at 32, and once again at 40 – you get off your track, based off of the accepted standards, or the conveyor belt, or distracted from your original goal, based off of the sparkly things that other people put in front of your path. And so, it just really comes back to that inquisitiveness about yourself and the influences that you've been taking on your whole life.

Lee Burgess:

I think it's so important. And I'll share a little bit about the poor choices I made over time, because I grew up in a community where not everybody went to school, so it was a very important thing that I went to a four-year college, and then I did well. And then it was very important that I get a job. And so, when I was offered a fancy consulting job, I was like, "Oh well, I must take the fancy consulting job because that's what you do if you get the fancy consulting job." So I took the fancy consulting job and I was miserable. Miserable. For years. And then I was like, "I've got to get out of this fancy consulting job, so I should definitely go back to school." Now, I'm from a family of lawyers, so going to law school was not outside the realm of possibility. But I took the LSAT and I was



like, "I love the law, I'm interested in it. I should do that." So again, I went back to school, and I loved it, and I leaned in and I did really well, and then it came time to get job offers. And then I got a job at a fancy big firm. And instead of saying, "Weird, I got this last fancy job where I worked all the time and didn't really have any work-life balance and was miserable, I should definitely get this other big fancy job where I'm going to work all the time." And I never took a moment and really evaluated it, because it felt prestigious to get that job offer. And so I took it, and then history just continued to repeat itself.

Jessica Elefante: And why did it feel prestigious to get that job offer?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's the question.

Jessica Elefante: That's the thing you pick apart: Why? What is that feeling? What does that signify to other people, if that's what you care about?

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. And then, I think, come the realities that you have to weigh against that, like money. How are you going to pay down your law school debt, if you've taken on that debt? That's why we often encourage students to really think about some of those initial choices, even if they do want to go back to school, because if you can do so with less debt, you may feel empowered to make different choices and think about some of those influences and responsibilities. So, it is really hard to slow down and evaluate what you're doing at different points of your life.

Jessica Elefante: And why you're doing it.

Lee Burgess: And why you're doing it. But I think life only gets more complicated, as our lives get more complicated, and you have to be better at making these opportunities for either pivots or life decisions – I mean, who you partner with, if you decide to partner with somebody, if you're going to become a parent. You have all these moments that you really want to make sure that you are evaluating why you're making those decisions. And I was better at evaluating all of those decisions than I was at what job I wanted. Although I clearly love being an entrepreneur. I've been doing it for a long time.

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, I love it too. I really do. And I think if people can figure out what it is that is driving them, what is that motivation. But also not thinking that there is some output on the end, like a certain. Maybe it is – maybe for some people it is, "Once I make this amount of money, then I will feel fulfilled or happy." But



oftentimes, I am old enough to say that those goalposts move along with life, along with the amount of kids that you add. And so, if you're always waiting for that final output to feel like, "This is it. I've reached peak happiness" – or contentment or whatever – I don't know that it ever arrives. But it's really in the process of the actual working, of the day-to-day, that if we stay more true to who we are and the reasons that we're doing it, then maybe you won't have burnout on the other end, because you were being led by a carrot that keeps moving.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's so true. I remember I used to go running with my best friend when I had my first corporate job that I was miserable at. And so, we were in our mid-twenties, which is when you do things like go running together after work. And after I quit that job, I remember we're on some run and I was like, "Wow, I was really unhappy." And she was like, "Yeah, I know, because I was the person you called night after night." And I do think when you're in that burnout place and you're in that unhappy place, it can be so hard to pause and reflect.

Jessica Elefante: Yes. And things that you used to think – and I do write about this, about the sort of gradualism of things that you would have never done or accepted or thought that you would have ever lived this way – gradually, inch by inch, you get closer and closer, where it's no longer obscene or outrageous or radical, but it's commonplace, it's every day. I think the analogy I use in the book is, "I thought I would be swimming in the Aegean in my underwear, but death by a thousand cuts, I'm wearing kitten heels in a WeWork." I was very far away from myself. I just think, what's the point in having the big giant house if that's what you want, if day in and day out you're not living up to your values of who you are? And now I know there are jobs that are required to learn and to grow and to connect and to network, and I've had a million crappy jobs that were all rungs on the ladder that led me to writing my book. But I think we get really lost when we end up stuck in those places for too long.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and the years start to stack up in a way that I think it's hard to remember when you're at the beginning of your career. You can wake up and it's been five years or ten years, and you're wondering how you got there.

Jessica Elefante: Running and your friend going, "Duh!"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. She's like, "Please, I'm so happy I don't have to talk to you about that anymore." Well, outside of just the influence on making some of these life choices, a lot of what you talk about in the book is about technology, which I



think you and I are around the same age – comfortably in our 40s, is how I've decided to start saying it.

Jessica Elefante: Ooh, I like that.

Lee Burgess: Somebody shared that with me this summer and I'm just going to lean into that label for a while. But we are the last of that generation who grew up with no real Internet. We were young adults... Oh, thankfully, my young adult life is not completely digitized forever and ever. The iPhone came out when I was in law school, so it was definitely a very... We had blackberries and things like that for work. But it really seems to be that we have to be more conscious about this. So, I love that you talk about phones and social media and things like that as an influence in our everyday lives. And I've become kind of obsessed about reading about this, because I have school-aged children and this is such a big conversation around my parent group of how we're going to raise kids with technology. And I read [Dopamine Nation](#) last year, which made me want to just hang up my phone forever, but then that is completely impractical.

Jessica Elefante: Yep.

Lee Burgess: So, as a human and as a parent – and I know you are also a parent – what are some of the major thoughts you would like to suggest to people as they consider their technology use and how much influence it has on our daily life?

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, I had started talking about this in 2014 with my media brand, Folk Rebellion, which was a digital wellbeing-focused media mission, if you will, that also sold pithy one-liner T-shirts. It's hysterical now to think about, because back then I knew I had to sell this as a counter-cultural lifestyle brand, because no one wanted to talk negatively about technology. We were still sucking at the fire hose of the "Yay, innovation", right? So here we are almost a decade later, and it's awful to see that people everywhere are feeling overwhelmed, addicted, unwell, unhinged, if you will, because of all of this tech and digital innovation. But what is amazing is that I'm not the only one having a conversation anymore and that there're people out there trying to do good things. You just had the Surgeon General come out and say the social media platforms and phones are not good for children – a big "Duh!" there, but I guess it had to take like 10 years for them to say, "Okay, we have the data to support it." So, I think we're at this kind of cool glass ceiling moment, where finally, the consumers, the users, the humans are saying maybe this isn't the best way to use it, or maybe it's not being designed with our best interests at heart, and so we need some change.



There're some really great groups out there trying to create regulation and systemic change from government, as well as how these new devices and new apps and new platforms are being built. And then there are changes happening in schools for the younger generations. But in our own homes, I used to tell people we can hack our way out of this with tips and tricks and boundaries and balance. But unfortunately, Lee, I tell you today that I'm going to eat crow on how I designed my whole brand, which is I don't think that we can have balance with it, how it's designed today. And I think that's really important for people to hear, because one, it gives you permission to take a breath. It's not your fault if you have an unhealthy relationship with your technology. It's literally designed to be that way. If your partner is ignoring you, if you're supposed to be focusing and you can't because your brain is riddled with this sort of Internet of things where it needs to be distracted – none of that is your fault. It's just not. And so, accepting that these things are not designed for what's best for us, and it's actually designed for what's best for the company who makes it, is really the great first step, because it kind of changes your perception and how to utilize it. And so, you can set up the timer, all of those things, which there's all these studies coming out that it actually does make you feel worse every time you decline it.

Lee Burgess:

I know. I've got a timer on my Instagram, and I just turn it off.

Jessica Elefante:

Yeah, yeah. And it makes you feel terrible. And then, you have the data in front of your eyeballs to obsess over. It's just not good. What I keep saying is, the one way out is to stop, they call it "techno supremacy", where tech, above all, is always the best, most efficient, best way. It's not, and we are seeing that, right? When you are in class, there's study upon study upon study about cognition of writing with a pencil and paper versus taking notes on a keyboard. So, if you want to be ahead of your peers, don't take notes on your computer. They've proven this. If you compute taking notes, you're dumping the information as quickly as you take it on. You're operating like a computing system, as opposed to when you write it by hand. It's actually having that physical 3D real world element that allows it to stay in your brain much longer for memorization. So, returning to the physical world, actually kind of stopping making it about tech at all and just think about being human. So, what are the things that really make us special and make us feel good and help us differentiate ourselves from the tech? That is to be as human as possible. So, 3D mediums – paper, magazines, books, whenever you possibly can. I get it if you're on a computer all day for work. When you get home, don't have it be your form of relaxation. Find something else, out in the natural environment. So, if you're going to go on a TikTok streak for an hour and you want to throw up afterwards, go for a walk for





another hour. These are all really obvious and they sound silly, but they are the things that over time have proven to really work. And then, utilizing the technologies and the platforms the way they supposedly were intended, which was for connection, but quickly taking that connection from superficial to deep. So, if you find someone across a continent that has the same interest as you, or they join a study group with you – you don't keep it superficial in just premeditated texting that happens on a keyboard. You have to move that connection offline as quickly as possible. And that could be as simple as a phone call or a face-to-face Zoom. And it's creating these sorts of superficial connections and making them deeper. So those are some of the easiest things that people can change to better have a relationship with their technology, while understanding that if they don't have a healthy one, all is not lost. It's just also not your fault. Am I depressing?

Lee Burgess: That's okay, because it's what we're all struggling with. I'm now trying to remember... I believe you were talking about digital dementia in the book. Is that...

Jessica Elefante: Yes. Yes. I had digital dementia in 2012.

Lee Burgess: And I then, of course, had to Google that and did a deep dive into that.

Jessica Elefante: Did you see it wasn't even a word yet?

Lee Burgess: I know. And I think that idea of just complete information overload, just our brains are not equipped to consume so much information. As I was listening to your book, I was definitely in one of those moments of all the things coming at me from all the avenues and all the time. And then I went on vacation, which was great, and I decided that I was just going to do little things, like I wear an Apple watch and I just didn't wear it. I went and dug out my pretty watch that I used to wear. It was a Christmas gift from pre-Apple watch. I know, it was nice. I dug it out and I'm like, "I'm going to just not track my steps for a week. I'm not going to get notifications as I walk around. And if I don't get a text the minute it comes in, it doesn't matter. I'm on vacation, right?" And then I got home and it was amazing, because I didn't realize how all those intermittent interruptions were just really exhausting my brain once I had reached the point of overload.

Jessica Elefante: I'm going to tell you something that's going to blow your mind right now.

Lee Burgess: Okay, alright, tell me.





Jessica Elefante: So, all of those interruptions, as you called them, or dings or pings or notifications – what happens to our body biologically when we receive one of those, even if it's a vibration on a phone that's across the room, but you can still kind of hear it, is the same biological response that our caveman ancestors had when a lion was charging at them. If you think about that, let's say you're a caveman and a lion's charging at you. How often do you think that happens in a week?

Lee Burgess: Probably not very often, I would hope.

Jessica Elefante: Right, maybe once. We could even say five times if we wanted, but maybe once, right? If that is equal to the notifications, think about how many times you've heard your phone or your computer or your smart refrigerator buzz by 10:00 AM.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Jessica Elefante: Those stressors are happening inside your body. For me, it's probably over a hundred times by noon. No wonder that we all feel absolutely depleted and exhausted and overwhelmed, because our body is in that state of fight or flight all day long. And it's not good for us. It's not good for our health, it's not good for our society, but it's definitely not good for our bodies.

Lee Burgess: No, and it makes us more inefficient, and it makes it harder for us to do the work that we care about. I think that that is one of the hard lessons to learn in a professional context, is if I want to be the best professional I can be, I need to not necessarily be as responsive, because I need to be able to work for an hour, or 90 minutes. I'm sure when you were writing this book, you had to block time to be able to just do one thing, and I'm sure that was super challenging.

Jessica Elefante: It's very challenging. I actually learned something a long time ago, which is that the Internet has made it so that basically, you're just reacting to things all day long. Specifically in work with email or texting, you are responding to somebody else's need of you, whether that is to just open their email or to respond to it or to do a deck that you didn't plan on doing. And so, if you ever want to create actual work and not just responses, and things that require your thought or your creativity, you have to create your time. And so, Cal Newport, who I love...

Lee Burgess: Oh, we love him too.



- Jessica Elefante: Yes, he wrote [Digital Minimalism](#). And one of his things was to do your most important thing first – most important to you, not most important to other people, but most important to your goals and your vision and your things that you want to succeed at in life. And so, it just happened today – I said to my husband, he's like, "Oh, are you going to write today or are you going to respond to emails?" And he knows if it's a writing day for me, I have to wake up, have my cup of coffee, get rid of my kids, and then go and sit down and write. I can't open an email, I can't worry about doctor's appointments, I can't do any other busyness because I need that fresh mind to actually be able to get two hours' worth of writing out. If I try and write at noon or 2:00 PM or 5:00 PM, I might as well just be throwing spaghetti at my keyboard. Nothing of substance comes out. And so, it's, again, that intentionality of deciding what it is you value, what do you want, not what other people say, and then not reacting to what people want you to do, but being intentional about what you think is most important to do.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true. My new favorite – I think it's a Mark Twain quote – is that you must eat your frog first in your day. Have you heard this one before?
- Jessica Elefante: No.
- Lee Burgess: Yes, and with the idea that you should do the hard thing or the thing that you aren't sure you're going to have time for, but do it first, because that is when we have the most willpower, the clearest head. It all diminishes throughout the day. And it's my new favorite mantra, is eat your frog first.
- Jessica Elefante: That is hysterical, I love that one. I've never heard it though. That's a good one.
- Lee Burgess: I had never heard it. I think I read it in a book on habits and creating good habits. But it's my new favorite tagline: Eat your frog first.
- Jessica Elefante: I'm going to tell that to my kids.
- Lee Burgess: I know, right? It's a great one. But my husband will always say, "Did you eat your frog first? Did you do the thing that you wanted to do first this morning?" So, when we think about professional context, you and I both work for ourselves, so we have a lot of power around how we frame our days. And I think where this digital consciousness or how we use technology gets tricky is implementing it into a professional existence, where I think you are rewarded for being available for many hours of the day. So, how do you think folks should consider



boundaries, or going into the workplace and saying, "I don't want to be a slave to my iPhone and I won't be able to do good work if I do that all day."?

Jessica Elefante:

Yeah, we live in a capitalistic society. You bring it back to the money. So, I used to do this all the time. I did this with clients, when I had clients that I was taking on in branding, and then I also did it in corporate. But basically, you ask for a meeting. Sometimes it can be done in an email, but usually I find these things are better face-to-face. And you just say, "I'm noticing that I am less efficient with my work during X, Y, or Z." Pick the busy days, pick the busy hours, when people are... And say, "I'm finding my best work comes out of X, Y, and Z", when people are leaving you alone, essentially. "And I would like to implement this in a trial", is how I always phrased it, "for a week." And I want to say that I'm only going to be available, responding to emails at this hour and this hour. And every business is different, every job is different. So for me, when I tried to do it the first time, I said I'll only be checking that first round of emails at 11:00 AM, again at 2:00 PM, and again at 5:00 PM. And my boss at the time had said, "Absolutely not. I need to know that you have read the emails from the night before." So we came up with a system and I said, "Okay, I will check those emails to make sure there're no fires before I come in. But once I'm here, you know I've checked them, and therefore you know nothing's on fire. I'm going to do what I need to do, and then I will get back to you at the 11:00 AM one." And so that worked. And I said, "We're going to try it for a week and if it doesn't work, we will readjust as needed. But I want to show you how much better my work is" and whatever you need to say. I have done this and I have coached people to do this. And do you know how many people actually say "No"? None, because they want you to be more efficient. They also want you to be happy and healthy, even if they're trying to get you to email 75 times in an evening, because those people are under influences of their own, but their influences don't have to become yours. So, I always say frame it as a trial, frame it that it's going to be better for the company, and let them not be able to say "No". And then what I did – some quick tricks is, during this, you announce it via email company-wide or whoever that you need to, you drop it into your email signature. So my email signature used to say like, "I respond to emails this time and this time." A couple of years ago, I think it said, "I'm not operating out of my inbox. I check it once a week. If it's urgent, call my cell phone." Guess how many people called my cell phone.

Lee Burgess:

Very few, I would assume.

Jessica Elefante:

Zero. Zero, because you're getting them to qualify urgent versus instant. Our culture is making us this convoluted sort of idea that everything that is instant is



urgent, but it's not. And so, we have to start qualifying those things again. And I promise you if you phrase it in this way – whoever's listening – most likely it's going to work. And if they don't, then maybe you might need to find another place that is really willing to put some situational changes into place.

Lee Burgess:

Yeah. I've really been focusing on this email management, because I was traveling and I was only skimming for fires. I was not actively working. And then when I got home, I just had a massive inbox. And then it's interesting, when you've taken that break, that I'm sitting there and I'm like, "Alright, I'm just going to go through and use that..." what is the two-minute rule or whatever. If I can deal with it in two minutes, I deal with it. If not, we use Trello – my business partner and I – and I will just plop it on my Trello board to be dealt with later. And it was just so nice to say, "I'm going to sit here and take this time", and I just sorted through everything. Quick things got dealt with. Future things, there was plenty of, "Please read this." And I just made myself a list and I'm like, "When I can have that deep work time – thanks Cal Newport – that I can go through that list and read the things that need to be read." But it was almost like, because I hadn't been in the office, there was a permission for me to not be responsive, because everyone knew I was gone, and it was very refreshing.

Jessica Elefante:

And a lot of times they figure it out themselves. You see all the stuff that you actually don't need to weigh in on or read about. I am noticing now with the publishing journey... I've been out of corporate for a long time, but I'm kind of forced back into it because of my publisher. I'm with a big five publisher and they have a very sort of corporate environment. And so, what I'm noticing is that this cool thing is happening in email, which is people will say, "Please remove me from this thread, unless you require something of me." Or they'll say, "Please, anything you would want me to read, save and send at the end of the week in a singular email." So, they are being very boundaried and very direct in how you can email them. And it was just out of, I'm sure, the absolute necessity of the amount of emails that they're getting. If it's humanly impossible to read the thousands of emails that we get a day, the quality of work goes down. Somebody has to stand up and go, "Wait a minute, this is not actually possible. We need to change things." And so, I would say that the people that are doing that are definitely younger, and they are feeling very confident to say, "I do not require this email. And if it is something, then you can call me." And it's been kind of refreshing. So, maybe try that.

Lee Burgess:

Yeah. Well, a lot of it is just being very aware and not just getting on the hamster wheel, which I think is what our generation did. And then the



technologies just kept getting more invasive and more invasive. And then this assumption was, now I can be more available, more available.

Jessica Elefante: Right. And the expectation.

Lee Burgess: Right. When I was growing up, my parents are both lawyers, and my dad had a fairly important job, and we had this tiny little cabin in the mountains that we would go to on the weekends. And there were only like three people who knew that phone number. Each set of grandparents knew, and then a couple of people at his work. It was like, you had to find someone to call us there, basically.

Jessica Elefante: The best feeling.

Lee Burgess: I know!

Jessica Elefante: I'm still forever searching for those moments and those places right now. I'm really hyper focused on tech intentional environments or communities, besides the Amish. So if you find any that are like that little cabin in the woods, but it's like a collective group of people – not like a cult. But I'm looking for them. I don't actually think they exist.

Lee Burgess: Maybe not, but we can keep an eye out. That's true. It is kind of shocking when you think back, when I think back to my childhood, of travel, or anything, just the day-to-day life, about what responsiveness meant, in the way that if somebody were to call my house at night because of an emergency, you assumed it was an emergency. And that is just so different now.

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, and then what we pass on to the kids. Just the idea that if you don't have a cell phone in your pocket, you should be scared, like, "Oh my God, you don't have a phone, I can't get in touch with you."

Lee Burgess: I know.

Jessica Elefante: Literally, there're millions of cell phones walking around. You can use anybody's cell phone if it's an emergency. But what's with this idea that there's always going to be an emergency and they must get in touch? And so, I'm forever sending my child out without... He has a dumb phone. And even that, he was like, "I don't have my phone." I was like, "Who cares? You don't need it. You



know where we live, where 20 other people live nearby. Borrow someone's phone."

Lee Burgess: I know. I did make sure my kids, especially my oldest – my littlest one doesn't have everything memorized yet – but I was like, "What's my phone number? What's dad's phone number?" You need to be able to walk up to an adult and repeat the phone number. Because I think if I just gave him something, he would be like, "Oh well, what is your phone number? I have no idea."

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, they don't know. Well, and in the same vein, all of the information our phones hold now, do we really have to know any of it? It's a terrifying thought.

Lee Burgess: It really is, I know. Alright, well, I could talk to you all day, but I did want to touch on one other topic that I felt was woven through the book, was this idea of happiness and how influence changes what we define as happiness. How do you think in this current world, if we don't go live on a tech, a digital... I feel like we need a name for this digital place...

Jessica Elefante: Tech Intentional Island. I can close my eyes, I can picture it. I'm already building it in my head. No, I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

Lee Burgess: Awesome, I want to come visit. But given this state of the world that we live in, how do you think we can stay grounded and focus on our happiness, given how much information is coming at us in a world that has a lot of hard things happening in it at all times?

Jessica Elefante: Yeah, of course, it's heartbreaking, it's horrifying – as a mother, as so many different things. When these devices were created, it took the world and put it on us. And where we used to have to sit down collectively together as a family and watch the five o'clock news – I'm sure many people listening to this don't even remember something like that happening – to know what was happening in the world. And then you had one another together in the room to discuss it, and it was something that was shared that was often serious. It was not sensationalized; it was reported. Everything has shifted so greatly. And so, I think part of it is we have to teach younger people and our children that this is not how news was consumed. It was also not how it was created. Just like everything else in the world right now, it is being a bit exploited for the benefit of other entities. And so, you look at what's happening on the social media platforms with everything that is going on with Israel, Palestine, and Gaza. There's the misinformation, there is the sharing of the imagery and the videos



and the violence, there is the recreation from AI of some of the imagery that isn't true, that it's a hot, hot f\*cking mess across the board. And so, the only thing that we can do right now for ourselves and our own sanity is, it's possible to care and to also be quiet. It's possible to care and want to enact change and also step away. And so, we have to put those boundaries on ourselves. We have to say what is okay for us and what is not. So, in our home, we are not consuming any of the media that comes across our phones on any sort of platform. We are reading about it in our newspaper – back to the old analog – because you're witnessing in real time where the online websites are sharing this information that has not been fully vetted. And it takes a few days to get it right and to understand exactly what has happened. Well, if you've read the Sunday paper, it's figured itself out by then. Not that the situation has figured itself out, but that the people reporting it have actually gone through the nuance and not created such a black and white picture, and figured out that maybe there was some reporting that was wrong. So, I think going back to protecting your four walls, your own body, figuring out how to find reputable sources in a medium that is not benefiting from your staying on it, and making sure that the sources that you are turning to are ones that also don't really benefit from your being triggered or saying, "Oh, I read this thing." And because your cousin posted something on TikTok is not reading this thing. We just have to really push back on this sort of accepted way of consuming information, for so many different reasons, but mostly that it's often wrong, it's sensationalized, it is for the exploitation of us, the viewers, to be able to stay on it and make money. And again, I guess it goes back to what we talked about right at the start, Lee – it's our values. What are our values? What are our morals? What are the things we want to protect? And being really intentional about it. And it sucks to lay the responsibility at the feet of the people when I think that the problems are so much f\*cking greater. They are, but right now, no one's coming to save us. And so, we have to save ourselves. And if that means turning off the TikTok stream and sitting and having dinner with your family and talking about it in person, it's way more healthy.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I always think about the advice that comes out, that they always talk about with children, that when children see imagery over and over again – violent imagery or imagery of a tragedy – they don't have the digital literacy, which most of us really don't have, but they feel like it's happening over and over again, because they don't know.

Jessica Elefante: Well, of course. Why wouldn't they?





- Lee Burgess: I always think about that, because I sometimes do not think my brain is that much more sophisticated. I remember at the beginning of COVID... I am an information gatherer, I love to consume information, and so I was reading all the things. And then I caught myself reading the same stuff again and again. And at some point my husband's like, "There is nothing new to learn. You must stop. There is nothing, there is no new information. You want there to be new information, but there is nothing new. You have to stop." And I just remember looking at him, but he's like, "You're going to drive yourself absolutely crazy."
- Jessica Elefante: But you're right, because you had become addicted to trying... That felt like control to you in some way.
- Lee Burgess: Right, exactly.
- Jessica Elefante: In some very uncontrollable situation. I know you had asked about happiness and I'm sorry I didn't talk about that.
- Lee Burgess: No, that's okay, but it's linked. It's all linked.
- Jessica Elefante: It's all linked, and it's really hard right now. And yeah, I think you're right – stop looking for new information. If you want to get involved in some way, it's proven over and over again – try and help people right at your front door and do little, little things that you can to bring a little bit of light every day.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true. And I always try to remember in my own life – and the universe has given me some sad reminders of this lately – that life is happening right now, and you need to do what you can with it in the moments that you have, because it is fleeting. So, it is okay to have hard times, because hard times are coming, but you also need to live in the moment and try and make the best of the times for you and your world, where you can find joy.
- Jessica Elefante: Yes, absolutely.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Unfortunately, it's not on Instagram.
- Jessica Elefante: No, it's definitely not.
- Lee Burgess: Even though I learned about your book on Instagram, so Instagram's not all bad.



- Jessica Elefante: No. Again, it's not. Make that connection, take it offline like we are doing here right now.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly, exactly. Alright, well, I could talk to you all day, but I'm going to let you go. But if folks want to know more about the book, your work, how should they learn more?
- Jessica Elefante: Yeah. So, the book is called [Raising Hell, Living Well](#), and it's available wherever books are sold. And I do have a Substack, which is called [Modern Bullshit](#) – that should probably not surprise anyone who just listened to this. And I am very sparingly on Instagram, it is the only social media platform I keep, and it is at [folkrebellion](#).
- Lee Burgess: Awesome. Thanks, Jessica. What a treat. I really appreciate it.
- Jessica Elefante: Thank you so much, Lee.
- Lee Burgess: 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@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:alison@lawschooltoolbox.com). Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolBox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

## **RESOURCES:**

[Jessica Elefante](#)

[Raising Hell, Living Well: Freedom from Influence in a World Where Everyone Wants Something from You, by Jessica Elefante](#)

[Modern Bullshit](#)

[Instagram: folkrebellion](#)

[Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence, by Anna Lembke](#)

[Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World, by Cal Newport](#)

[Podcast Episode 125: Maintaining a Professional Profile in the Digital Age](#)

[Digital Distraction: When Is Media Helpful and Harmful While You Are Studying](#)