Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have Anne Ditmeyer – the author of *Override!* – joining us on the podcast. 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. Today, we're excited to have a non-lawyer be joining us. Her name is Anne Ditmeyer and she is the author of *Override! What If There Was Another Way?* So I'm really excited to have you on the podcast and to talk about, oh my gosh, goal setting and doing things your own way and not following a typical path. This is one of my favorite things to talk about. So I'm so excited to have you on the podcast. Thanks for joining us.

Anne Ditmeyer: Thank you. I'm so happy to be here. And when you reached out to me, I was literally thrilled to be able to reach a different audience and, quote, "creatives", because I believe everybody's creative and there are things we can all learn from each other. I'm so excited to explore this book through your lens today as well.

Lee Burgess: Love it. Yeah, I loved reading the book. So to get things kicked off, why don't you share a little bit more about yourself and what was your own journey to land you here as an author, as a coach? You run workshops on creativity and planning. So I want to hear more about how you got here on your path.

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah. I think there's a lot of pressure in life to have everything figured out, but for me, I really realize it's been revealed like one step at a time. And when I zoom out, everything kind of makes sense. But to the average person, most of my friends, my family, they're like, "I have no idea what you actually do, but I think it's really cool." My studies were Art History and Anthropology. So, Anthropology – human-centric, all that, so keeping that in mind. And then I didn't want any master's degrees. I got two – one in Publications Design, essentially Graphic Design, and second one in Global Communications, which brought me to Paris. So, for a long time I called myself a designer. And I started in the visual world, but then I discovered design thinking, which is used in the business world, and it's just creative problem solving and user experience. So again, it comes back to that anthropology background that I had no idea any of

this world existed when I started. And then from there, I was giving tours. I'm also an American in Paris, so that's an interesting plot point, just because it gives me this insider-outsider perspective, and it forced me to do things differently. French bureaucracy had a lot of limitations, working rights. You want to get into the legalities of that? There's a whole other tangent.

Lee Burgess: I don't think we have time. That's a whole another podcast.

Anne Ditmeyer: But I love to talk about creative constraints in my work. And so all these things I couldn't do instead of complaining about it, it forced me to get more creative. And I felt like pulled to start doing coaching, and I realized that coaching in the typical way, it was great, but it wasn't really resonating, and you see everybody share their success stories without sharing the journey. There're so many things where I thought it'd be a certain way and then the pandemic happened. But before the pandemic, I really realized I wanted to do more workshops, and that's funny because I was an introvert, quiet one growing up, so I'm surprising myself as much as surprising everyone else in the process. So, running creative workshops. I run a three-month program, which is workshops and community called Mapping Your Path, and I really help people get out of their heads, use pen and paper, draw maps. We're going to get into more of that, but so much of my design background informs what I do in workshops. And I work with schools and corporate clients, to help people think differently and really embracing the side of community and connection and connecting with ourselves and with others. It hasn't been a typical path, but it's been really fun for me, and my online presence, my blog, which started as a travel blog, pretavoyager, which is my Instagram handle – that became a business card to opportunities and explorations, meeting people, and just writing. So, it all led to writing a book, but that's my not-so-typical journey that makes perfect sense to me. But sometimes things don't make sense until hindsight, until we zoom out.

Lee Burgess: So true. Been there, done that. So, I met you at a talk that you did. You did not seem like an introvert at the talk that you did, where we did get to do some of these activities with your mapping, which was really fun. What brought you to writing a book, which is something very different than running workshops and working one-on-one with clients? So, why did you want to take your work and put it in book form?

Anne Ditmeyer: It's funny, because if somebody would ask me a year ago, I would say, "Oh, I'm not a writer", but I can look back to different parts of my life and I have written and enjoyed it. And during the pandemic, I joined a group called London Writers' Salon who has a free Zoom room. And I just got into this daily habit of writing, which this is a really nice way to stay centered. Truth be told, I didn't

know I was writing a book when I started writing this book. And it's been almost a two-year journey, but August 2022, I found myself pulled to go sit in cafes with my iPad, unplug from work and my desk. It was nice outside, have my coffee – it was a date with myself – and just start writing. And I would do it not connected to the Internet. And it just became this joyful exercise for myself. And it was most days, but not every day. A lot of this started with a conversation with a friend, and then I noticed in my Mapping Your Path community, and with friends and with strangers, I was having these conversations that very much resonated with me and there's this whole unfolding of, "Wait, you think this too? Why is it like this? Why haven't we questioned it?" And so it seems common sense to be asking this stuff, but it was stuff that was not talked about – how our schooling shaped us, society. A lot got unlocked during the pandemic, not just in the health standard, but societal, social justice. A wakeup call for me, who felt very well educated, school, got all the degrees, diplomas. And on paper, great, but it's, "Whoa, let's talk about this – our own personal journeys and things not looking like we think." I didn't know I was writing the book, I didn't tell anybody online that I was writing the book until it launched. So it became this personal thing, which was great because I didn't have the outside influences shaping me or forming me, which is a topic in the book, like how sometimes just a random comment from a stranger can take us off course or feel like we're doing something wrong. But it really got to be this thing I got to enjoy. I would tell friends from time to time in-person, but then I didn't want the pressure of having to keep going at a certain rate. So, it just got to be this little thing that I got to see, what happens if I do this? And it's been a really joyful, delightful process. And I also learned that I love learning in the process, because publishing and self-publishing, which I did by choice, is a whole learning curve.

Lee Burgess: Oh, it's its own business, own everything.

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah. But I did all of this too, because it builds on all the work I've done to this point. So, it was a natural unfolding, and I feel like I have more books in me now. But there's a whole journey as a writer in believing in yourself, and in anything we do, to believe that we're capable and see what happens and work through some of those blocks and keep going and get through those sticking points.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's awesome. So, I read the book, and here's what I found special about the book, and why I wanted you to come talk to the podcast about this: It's like a guided intellectual exercise. I'm a big fan of those. I really like doing that. And I was thinking about where in life this kind of guided intellectual exercise would be helpful. Well, every now and then we're all at different points

where we're making choices. I'm not at a pivotal choice-making moment in my life. I've made a lot of my big choices and I'm happy with them, mostly. But I was thinking about when you can use these exercises. And for me, I was thinking it could be valuable when starting something new. And then it could also be valuable for someone who is trying to make choices about the next thing. And so, that's our audience, right? Most people listening to this podcast are either starting law school, or they're ready to become brand new, fresh lawyers. They're maybe choosing what job to have. And I was thinking about how when I was a young, sprightly lawyer, I did none of this work, like none of it. And then I ended up in a corporate job that I didn't like, which was my second corporate job that I didn't like, because I went to law school to escape the first corporate job that I didn't like. And I was thinking about how helpful it is to go through these different points. So, one of the things I thought was so cool was that I think you can use this and the exercises in it at all different inflection points. Was that your idea, that it could reach different audiences at different times, or you could reread it at different times? What were your thoughts about how it could be used?

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah, I had a lot of ideas based on my own experiences, and as you can see from my background I have a ton of books, and I've read a lot and kind of critiqued them in what I wished and didn't. But I also can tell that the book now that's been out in the world, it's going even further than I could have imagined. But one thing I knew is I wanted a book that was pocket size, it was lightweight, easy to travel with, that people could write in, that wasn't some precious object. There're so many wonderful books out there, but they could use an editor or they're a little bit heavy. Something about saving time is like the densest, thickest book that I've seen, and not that it's bad, but we all have limited bandwidth, a lot to do, things are overwhelming. So I wanted to take off the load and lighten the barrier to entry. So I knew I wanted something that was easy to take with on a trip, you could open to any page on any day, you could look at it differently. I knew it was something that would resonate differently in different seasons of life, because even in the nearly two years working on it, I can see my own evolution, and it was very healing to write. One of the last things I did was add a note at the very beginning about *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. That's one of my favorite books that I reread every year. I know Brené Brown, it's one of her favorites. A lot of people read it. But every time I reread that book, I take something new from it or notice something I didn't notice before. I think the book can allow for points of reflection or ask new questions that might unlock something else, because we're in our own way a lot of the time, and it's not just you or me; it's everyone. And that's hard to admit, but it's not a bad thing. We're human, and so I wanted to make people feel more human. And also say that a lot of my clients are in pivotal points. There's a lot of burnout, a lot of career transition. Starting out a new career in a way is

daunting, because you don't know what's ahead. You might have some, quote, "baggage" or stories or people saying, "Oh, watch out. That's impossible. You're never going to be able to do it." For me, it's always like flipping the question, like, "Okay, I hear you, but let me see if I try." So yeah, I think sometimes it's not easier, but sometimes not knowing all the answers, having that beginner's mindset makes it easier to make those changes. But I think having some of these tools and having these mindset frames to help you shape and be aware of what you're thinking and why you're thinking that, can be really helpful. But yeah, people in burnout, looking for change. It's hard to make those changes, it takes a lot of small steps to get there. I wanted it to be practical and actionable.

Lee Burgess: And I was thinking, I've read a lot of the books that you reference in the book. Some of them I haven't read in a long time. I was like, "Oh yeah, that is a great thing that comes out of that book." I also appreciated the section on habits. I do a lot of reading about habits, we talk about habits on the podcast and with our own clients and students, that I'm like, "Yeah, that is a good point." I also liked that even if you have read some of the things mentioned in there, it was a little bit like these snacks of these themes that maybe you've read, but you brought them back and they were layered next to each other. The other thing I thought was interesting that I think we don't often do at the beginning of a journey, whether it's a new career, a new school experience, is really look at the goal setting and a bit more of a whole person. What do you think success is going to be like? I think you were talking about, what are these beliefs that we are holding as we go into this? I've had on the podcast Jessica Elefante, that wrote a really interesting book on influence, and she talks a lot about, are we aware of who's influenced us and how do we decide what success looks like? And I know when I was at that point in my career, I did not ask myself those questions. I was pretty sure I knew what success looked like. It was just unfortunate that it didn't make me happy. So, I think kind of asking yourself these questions or at least even creating space for them and then journaling through them, because you're going to discover things on this journey of, what kind of job do I want? What kind of internships do I want? And how am I going to be excellent? How am I going to invest in myself? Most law students are spending fortunes going to law school. What do you want out of it? What do you want? And I really liked the fact that I felt like the book could call these questions up for you, and at different points in your journey of starting something new, you could really just find that authentic voice, which I think is so important. I also liked that you were talking about the whole person. You talk about grief, you talk about lots of other things that come up in life that we think sometimes aren't really linked to some of our professional choices, but they totally are, because we're all whole people. So I really liked that there was a bit broader of a discussion of the things that you should be thinking about when you think about what you want your life to look like, not just typical measurements of success.

Anne Ditmeyer: I love hearing what resonates with people too.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I know. And I'm sure if I read it in a year, probably something else would resonate for me too. I really liked part three. Can we talk about part three? Well, first let's let everybody understand how the book is organized. So, you can give us a little bit of an overview of how you organized the book, so that people can work through it. Do they always start from the beginning to the end? Can you go into different parts of the book?

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah, I think it's a nice idea to read through front to back. And it can be a really quick read, like one of my beta readers read it in two hours. But also, I find a lot of people are telling me they want to slow down and savor it. At the same time, you can jump to any page, flip to any page on any given day, and you might need that reminder or an opportunity to reflect on what resonates with you that day. But overall, there are three parts, which I feel are how I envision *Override!* The first part is acknowledging and naming what's going on – some of it's our privilege, our bias, our upbringing, our schooling, if you grew up in an urban environment, or rural, or different countries, or parents from different places. There're so many different things that shape us, and people draw mind maps and think about that. Part two is really about mindset and also thinking about reframes, because a tiny shift in words can completely shift how we show up in the world and how we approach things, and it can lighten the load. So, that's really important for kind of unblocking so we can make progress. And I see progress is happening on an individual level, but also societal. But we can't wait for society to change, so we have to start and let the contagion happen that way. And then part three is about strategies for action – so again, making the choice of how we show up in the world. I think about *Override!* as, it's not just a reset or a reboot. It's new action is required for a different outcome. So if you're frustrated in life or feeling stuck, if you keep doing the same thing every day, it's not going to work. At the same time, I think often we wait to take that first step, because we think it has to be this big, daunting, overwhelming thing, when literally going for a walk or taking a shower or bath can change everything. Just stepping away for a couple of minutes. So, it's just these little reminders. And as you said earlier, a lot of things you read are not new and novel, but it's things that we need to remind ourselves of because we forget the basics. So, it's an invitation to come back to those really foundational, simple things that can really support us, or things we may have never tried before and just see what happens if I try it. I don't expect everyone to do everything, but it's a playbook. And just like in sports, you don't run every play, every day, every game. You use what you need in that moment, in that season.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I'm so action-oriented as a person. I did read the whole thing, but of course I'm like, "Let me dig into the action part, because that's just what gets me going." But what I liked about it is, there was that overriding theme: Give yourself a beat, give yourself some space, give yourself an opportunity for reflection. And I think that is something that when we get very busy – and I think all of our listeners on this podcast are incredibly busy and probably feeling overwhelmed by their busyness – it is our inclination to not stop. Not just to not rest, but to not stop. And I really felt like in your action section, there was this idea of, "Let's take some space." Take some space to journal, take some space for gratitude, take some space for grief, if that's going on with you, take some space to work on your habits, take little steps, just to really step back. And I think that is such an important thing to do. All of us high-functioning people – and law students tend to be very Type A perfectionist type personalities – it's very hard for us to do that. That's not how we've become successful up to this point, that it's just such a good reminder. One of them that I circled was the alarm on your phone to do the gratitude check, which I think you said was at four o'clock, to do your three points of gratitude for the day. And then if you're with somebody, you can ask them their three points of gratitude. I have read about gratitude practices many times, but I was like... First, I love an alarm, so I'm like, "Ooh, that's a great idea." And then I loved that whoever you're with, that you incorporate them. It was just a slightly different take of like, how can I slow down and create this moment that doesn't feel so big? You're not asking me to meditate for 20 minutes a day, but who doesn't have 30 seconds to do three points of gratitude, which we know from science is going to make us feel better humans?

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah, I absolutely love that, and it's something I learned from somebody in my community – Ashley. And she does this, and I've done it with clients. We happened to record a podcast in-person and I stopped, and they loved it. I've done it with a six- year-old who was like, "Can we keep doing it?" And so, it surprises people. And you get to move on, but sometimes we just need to hit "Pause" and shift the energy and appreciate what's around us. And it can be really simple, but saying it out loud. And sometimes I just mumble it to myself. It's really quick, it's just, "Oh wow, yep. Okay." It's a moment to take that pause and just be grateful for things in a world that moves really fast and is a little bit crazy and very heavy sometimes.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think what I liked about the pocket nature of the book is for our audience who doesn't have a lot of extra time, this is definitely something that, like you said, could be read over a quick vacation or a long weekend, and then you can revisit it in these bite-sized chunks, because sometimes I think when you do self-reflection type work or goal setting, it can feel very overwhelming.

And many books and resources on that are very overwhelming. You feel like you're taking on a course. But I did feel that your suggestions in here are... Of course, you could invest a significant amount of time – you have whole workshops and courses that folks work with you over long periods of time on some of these themes – but you could also just take it as bite-sized chunks and do an exercise a day. And over a few weeks, I think you would have made it through the book and probably felt in a different spot, or at least much more aware of where you are. So, I think that's also something that was special about it, that I noticed, is it was very digestible. You talk about taking tiny steps sometimes to make change, and then you created something that could be absorbed in tiny bite-sized pieces.

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah. It's all things I've observed in my community that I have to remind people of over and over. And we need these little reminders and the reinforcement, it goes to the neuroscience, but it's all to be there. And it's about doing less than we think we need to and giving ourselves that space, because we rarely do that.

Lee Burgess: So true. Well, let's talk about bananas, because one of the things you are known for is banana-mapping. I have now successfully mapped on a banana. I will share a photo for those of you who are watching on YouTube. My banana has gone bad, so I don't have the banana anymore, but I thought it was a great exercise. Can you share more about banana-mapping, why you think it's a really great thing to do, and how anyone can try it, if you have a banana or something else that you could draw on?

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah. Banana maps are unexpected and they sound like a gimmick, but I've actually found they're deeply profound. And as you already spoke to earlier, there tend to be a lot of perfectionists in the world you're in. And it's an opportunity to unlock some of the perfectionism. Bananas don't last forever, as you've also already pointed to. And to get people out of their comfort zone in a very safe way that's like comfortably uncomfortable. And it only lasts for a few minutes, the exercise. So, there's something very cathartic about mapping on a banana. I highly recommend a ballpoint pen, because of the texture. And so, I would invite everybody just to try it, and if you're rolling your eyes at me right now or judging it, also be aware of your own judgment, because a lot of the times we can be quick to judge or assume something's not going to work for us, but trying it helps. And there are two banana map prompts in the book, but I always like to start with, map your journey, in your case of getting to law school or becoming a lawyer. Where in childhood did that start? Or different influences or favorite teachers. So, do it on a banana, it's a 3D surface, and see what happens. It's fun to do with friends and share. But Lee, I would love to know what came up for you. Do you remember on your banana?

Lee Burgess: I do remember my banana. So I think the prompt you gave us in your talk... And honestly, folks, we had a whole room of people drawing on bananas. It's like a group activity, and it was really fun to do it with other people – some I knew, some I didn't – and we're all comparing bananas. It was great. I focused on kind of internal things. I think the prompt that we were doing in the room was we could write about things going on in the world or things going on with us. And for me, I feel that I'm at a transition point, because I have two children and my children are becoming older. And so, I am leaving a phase of my own kind of overwhelm of needing to be so present in all of these very specific ways, and I'm moving into having a bit more space to do the things that I'm passionate about. So, my banana map was about moving away, but also intentionally moving away and saying, "This is a different kind of a chapter. I'm no longer going to have small children in my life. And that allows me to invest more in my professional world, invest in my hobbies, connect with other people, do other things." Eve Rodsky calls it the "unicorn space". It's giving me more space. And so, mine was about that – this kind of moving from more of a constricted survival place to a place with more space. But I thought it was interesting in the room. Some folks chose world events that were possibly very personal to them, but others chose professional events that were very personal to them. I thought it was so cool to see how the prompt really resonated with everyone very differently. Is that something that you see when you do this in workshops as well?

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah. And I think some of the beauty is, in all my workshops, I always give guidelines of, there's no right and wrong way of doing this. I love when participants take an exercise that I give a prompt, and same in the book, and take it a totally different direction, because that's how I learn and I'm inspired. And banana maps came from a student in one of my Skillshare classes a decade ago. Yeah, I think it's really interesting. And sometimes we want to look over people's shoulders to be like, "Am I doing this right?" But there's no right or wrong, and so it can go different directions. I want banana maps, I want my book to be a conversation starter, to just be like, "Oh, people are thinking differently", and be inspired by that and realize that we can learn from each other. And I think there's something about being on a banana, like into the physicality, and turning it and showing people. And I encourage drawing. If you don't draw, draw, don't just write words, but words are fine too. But it's about not overthinking it and going straight to the banana, because we can get stuck in our heads. It is part of that action step, but yeah, it can go so many different directions. And that's why I always say it can be this or this, or just see what comes out. And sometimes people do very abstract drawings, but there's something in the banana storytelling too, and talking through it, and witnessing ourselves. I like to think it helps us come back to our inner child and the things that we love, and being a kid again, where it's like, "Oh, you don't care, it's not

for a good grade." But yeah, it can go so many different directions, and that's what I love about it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. There's no perfectionism in the banana-mapping, because there's no way. It's a banana. My kids were so excited about the banana. When I came home, they fought over who was going to get to eat the banana that I'd drawn on. It was amazing.

Anne Ditmeyer: Oh my goodness, I love that. And some people now, they're like, "Ooh, I digested my banana, so these ideas are in me." But it's also a snack, because I think staying well fueled is really important to make us function, going back to those basics again. You can make banana bread with it, so it's not wasteful. Even if you're studying for the bar exam, or whatever you're doing, and you have a banana, be like, "Ooh, I'm going to draw on it before I do this." It's finding those little moments of joy, and there's a lot of delight. Again, I think it's necessary in this heavy world of ours.

Lee Burgess: I think it's true. And there's something about forcing yourself to be whimsical, I think, if you're a serious person. This is a whimsical thing to do, to draw on a banana. It does just free you, because it's not permanent, nobody's going to see it, you can eat it if you want. There's a silliness element to it, which can be very freeing and is something I think that often we can lose when we're doing serious, hard things in high-stress environments. And I think graduate school can be one of those things, for sure. Law school can be very serious and feel very serious. Practicing law is some serious business, and you can lose your whimsy in seriousness. And so, I think there's something about that exercise.

Anne Ditmeyer: Yeah, and I think that's so true. And I love to remind people that two things or multiple things can be true at once. So, it can be hard and heavy and doing important work, and you can find moments of joy and fun. And sometimes that's how we have the breakthroughs. And I just see how we've moved through school and life and work, and we take any fun and joy and delight out of it. So, how can we inject some of those moments and not take everything so seriously? And it may just unlock something. It might not certain days, but I've seen people have really profound insights as well. So, I just like to encourage people to stay open.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I can't remember where – I think it was in part three of the book – you were talking about como scheduling and reflection onto your calendar. I can't remember if you suggested doing it every month or periodically, but that's an idea I've seen a few different places and I think that when you're in a high stress

and a very busy time, where you're working really hard or you're in school and you're under a lot of stress, we often never reflect on, are we happy, are we still feeling good about these goals? How have you seen reflection be something? And the banana-mapping, I'm sure, could be part of that too, but these reflection points while you're on a journey, why do you think they're so important and how often should they be scheduled in?

Anne Ditmeyer: I mean, I think we never do them.

Lee Burgess: That's fair.

Anne Ditmeyer: It's crazy. Even for my book launch parties and book events, I want them to be dynamic and interactive, and give people that opportunity to connect and reflect. But for me, I've realized it's really important to build in that time into the experiences I'm creating, because if it's not there, we're not going to do it, and we don't need more homework and one more thing to do. And reflection doesn't have to be a 30-minute, hour, two-hour thing. Again, we hear the gurus saying, "I meditate two hours a day", and that's just not realistic. I have a very spacious life that I've intentionally created and I don't have time for that. I use Zoom chat in my online workshops, or journaling, and I give a couple of prompts – the prompts throughout the book – and some people can do audio notes and they're walking, or just sometimes when I'm leaving a Marco Polo or a voice note for a friend, that's almost a form of reflection and journaling. And I like to think of it as like touchpoints for data collection. And sometimes we're so in the thing that we're in the swirl that we can't actually see our growth or progress. And so, I do weekly check-ins with my community. So, a lot of people aren't pulled to learn one more thing, but it's to give themselves the gift of space. In the book, I am pretty sure I even mention it on one of the blank pages, like, "Breathe, take a moment to reflect." I think we can also be so regimented, and I'm going to venture to guess that lawyers are like, "Okay, this is what I do, I have to do this." And I have a lot of lawyer friends, all my friends from college. Love them all, but it's more the system and society and why is it moved like this. So, how can you be the disrupter by being like, "Okay, I'm going to take two minutes to journal"? What if a senior partner is like, "Okay, we're going to take two minutes to journal and reflect. Turn to your partner sitting next to you, and what is one thing you want to celebrate or an insight from the day?" But it can be micro moments. I talk about habits in the book too, something I do in my community, where it's like, what is a two-minute habit you can practice every day? Start small, because then you can kind of continue, instead of like, "I'm going to do 15 minutes of journaling, and then two hours..." It doesn't have to be all the big things. It's the small pieces. And I say the same things over and over in my community space and in my workshops, and it feels redundant, but

we need these reminders. And yeah, it sounds so obvious, but we forget the essentials.

Lee Burgess: We do, and I think modern life really trains us that way. The other day I was out somewhere on a walk and I didn't have my headphones with me. And I was on a long walk without any entertainment. Then you realize how little we walk with no entertainment, and how that really spacious thing made me think maybe I should be doing that more often. Or I was recently traveling and doing a long train ride and I read a whole book on the train ride. And I can't remember the last time I sat and read. It wasn't that thought provoking; it was a beach read type book. But it was still just in a different world, reading, not on a screen, not having all this sensory stuff coming in. And then I realized that felt very different, because that's usually not how we take breaks in this modern world. It's usually a lot more information or noise or something coming in. And it's just a good reminder that I think in this life of devices that we live in, that you have to be intentional to get moments. They don't even have to be complete silence, but of just more silence. And then you're amazed at what pops into your brain, or how refreshed you might feel on a silent walk for 15 minutes.

Anne Ditmeyer: Because we are about optimizing and productivity. And you can look at who are some of those voices and the privilege they have in saying that. And so it's like, how can we disrupt just by saying "Oh, I'm like a fancy pants lawyer, and I read a beach read on the train, and it was great. And I didn't do any of the work I should have been doing", or whatever, just to normalize, "Oh yeah, I need nothing." I was a big podcast digester, but right now, I'm like, "Ooh, I think I just need space." Maybe music, but I always try to have a few walks a week where I'm not listening to anything.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so, I think when we think about doing some of this personal work or giving us space for reflection, when you think about those little steps, like a walk with no headphones can be all you're asking of yourself, which I think almost anyone has the space to do, because we do so often plug ourselves in and just prevent ourselves from sitting in any sort of quiet, even if it's for 10 minutes. So, I think that these little things can be so critical. Alright, so you work, doing coaching, doing these workshops, having your community. What are some of the main lessons you've learned from working with your coaching clients? And you have an international audience, because you do live abroad. So, what are some of the main themes and lessons you've learned?

Anne Ditmeyer: Building on what you were just saying, something that I find that I like to normalize, encourage people to recognize – which, all these things were things nobody ever taught me or taught in school, so I've learned everything the hard

way and like to share – but it's like learning to sit with the discomfort, and I like to call it "dancing with the discomfort". And so, realize that when you're doing something new or different, it's not always going to flow. We're trying to get to the flow, but it's a practice over time. In the book, there's a picture of a lobster that I drew, there's a video a friend had told me about. It's about shedding your skin and getting bigger. And it's a process over time. Realize that not everything is going to be smooth, but discomfort's part of the growth. And it's not a bad thing, and sometimes people can get scared or want to stop, but can you keep going? And then it feels so rewarding when you get to that other side. Another one is to start before you're ready. Sometimes I see people feeling like they have to have everything figured out: "I have to have the plan, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, I'm going to go to school, and I can get this, and I can get this." And then if something doesn't work out as you have perfectly planned it, it can be jarring. And for you all, your law world might be pretty well-planned, just by the path that you need to take to get to the workplace and everything, but maybe start journaling before you want, or start knitting, or start tee-ball or whatever it is, something on the side. Don't wait for the perfect moment and try to just find those different moments. And then I think the third one... And this is all things that like five-years-ago me never would have said, but listen to your body. It's this incredible barometer of when are things getting really tense, what is triggering to me, what is that helping to tell me? It's not a failure on your part. It's just information. Burnout doesn't have to get so extreme before we take action. So that's where those little action steps in part three come in handy. And also, you get to use your intuition with your body, where it's like something's really not feeling right. Start paying attention to it. But it also might be a little bit of a ping of intuition of like, "Oh, let me go look at that court case from", da da da. Like, "This makes no sense. Why should I go there?" So, sometimes they're like little clues. Look for the magical moments, because we get so bogged down, but sometimes taking that journey and really savoring the journey rather than the end point is really the joy in it all. And we can pleasantly be surprised along the way.

Lee Burgess: I think that's true. I am also a big fan of when it works out, saying "yes", putting yourself in different situations. Maybe they're a tiny bit uncomfortable at times, but you never know what may come from situations. So, my business partner and I met, oh my gosh, now it's like 13-14 years ago – it was a long time – on Twitter, and then we had coffee. And then we became friends and then we started a company together. And if I hadn't gone to coffee with this random person that I met on Twitter, I could have never had this great professional life and we would never have built this brand and collaborated. And I really think that sometimes, especially if you are an introvert, you can say "Ooh, I don't know if I want to meet that person, what if they don't say 'yes'?" or, "I'm going to ask somebody random to be on my podcast and they might say 'no'." And

sometimes they do, but I've had people say "yes" that I didn't think would say "yes". So, sometimes you just put yourself out there, and I think that practice also allows you to have a little fun, but it's something you have to try. If you want to make professional connections and you meet somebody, you can just say, "Do you have time for a coffee" or, "Can I contact you for coffee", or a Zoom coffee? And I think most of the time people will say "yes", but we have to be willing to just do that tiny thing, which is to ask them to do it, and you never know how it's going to unfold. And sometimes these things are dead ends, but sometimes they can be magical. You just have to be open enough to them. You just never know.

Anne Ditmeyer: So many of my closest friends, best connections, interesting opportunities have come through my blog, Twitter, Instagram. And sometimes it's about you putting stuff into the world that inspires you. For me, it's like sharing that I love swimming pools. I was invited a decade ago to be in a book about the joy of swimming. You never know what it's going to lead to. Don't reach out, "I'm going to reach out strategically to do this." But so many of my mentors don't really know they're my mentors; we're just friends. And so, it's just reaching out and letting people know you appreciate their work. So, it's tiny actions, but it also can make you feel good to know you let somebody know that their work was important.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And the world can be very small. I mean, you and I didn't know each other, I did follow you on social media. I go to this event, which was one of these things where I'm like, "I don't know that I'm going to know anybody there, but I'm just going to go." I ended up seeing friends there that I didn't know knew you. And then we find out we have this community of people in common. And what if I hadn't said "yes" to going to this event? We wouldn't have gotten to meet and I wouldn't know that we were in a similar community of people. And that's a magical thing. I think you do have to be willing to look for those opportunities, where maybe you're just like, "Well, I'll just give it a try." And maybe sometimes it doesn't work out, but sometimes things can be great. And then you can banana map about them.

Anne Ditmeyer: Exactly. You never know. And that's why I love to zoom out again and map and find these plot points of life and be like, "Oh my God, that connection." And who knows what listener is listening to this right now that it's going to lead to something else? And so, it's just like planting the seeds and letting them grow. You can't control a plant as it grows, but let it nourish yourself and see what happens.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, we are unfortunately out of time, about, but I wanted to see if you could give our listeners three pieces of advice for starting a new journey, since pretty much everyone who's listening to this is starting some kind of a journey.

Anne Ditmeyer: Go for it. Don't let other people's comments redirect you. Keep trusting yourself, and have fun. The hard can be fun. And celebrate the steps along the way, because that's really going to change everything, and it's energy. Get to be proud of yourself and celebrate yourself too, and more than just the paper and the accolades, but the finding new links and connections.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And even when you're doing something hard, this is life. Life is happening while you're doing something hard. You're not putting your life on hold to do something like school or start a new career. This is life, so you might as well participate in it.

Anne Ditmeyer: I need to add though, and then pay attention to those connections. Foster relationships. It doesn't have to be a million people. My small groups have always just led to natural cross-pollination. So, you never know who or how somebody might help you in the future. I'm always amazed, even with this book, people from the past coming and sharing and doing different things. Yeah, just be human and it will work out for you. So, it's not on your timeline always, but just trust that what you're doing matters and it will come together with time.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, amazing. I've loved this conversation. Thank you so much for your time. If our listeners want to learn more about your work and your book, how can they find out more?

Anne Ditmeyer: Everything is on AnneDitmeyer.com. I have a biweekly newsletter if you want some non-legal inspiration. I'm pretavoyager – it means "ready to travel" – on Instagram. I look like a garden gnome. And then *Override! What If There Was Another Way? A Pocket Playbook for Possibility* is only available through me directly at this point. So, the website is Override-Book.com. And I actually have a companion Substack as well, which it's all meant to continue the conversation. So there'll be more opportunities to reflect. Substack for those who don't know it, it's like a blog meets newsletter, where it comes to your inbox. So, my goal is to take one post a month instead of this crazy content, like churn, churn, churn, to give us time to reflect and think about it. Yeah, and I would love for people to connect. And if you read the book, I love hearing from readers and what resonated with you.

Lee Burgess: Awesome. Well, we'll link to all those resources in the show notes, and thank you so much for your time.

Anne Ditmeyer: 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 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!

RESOURCES:

Anne Stark Ditmeyer
Instagram: pretavoyager
Override! What If There Was Another Way?, by Anne Ditmeyer
Podcast Episode 381: Find Your Unicorn Space: Reclaim Your Creative Life in a Too-Busy World (w/Eve Rodsky)
Podcast Episode 427: A Discussion with Author Jessica Elefante on the Power of Influence in the Digital Age
Podcast Episode 432: Creating New Habits and Optimizing Time Management
Podcast Episode 458: The Lost Art of Connecting (w/Susan McPherson)