Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about what you need to do before your first day of law school. 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.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Today we're going to be talking about what you can do now to get ready for law school.

Lee Burgess: Well, it is a new year. Law school applications are up, people are getting ready to go to school. It's kind of an exciting time over the summer.

Alison Monahan: It is. I feel like this is a time for people to get ready and get all of their ducks in a row and set themselves up for the best possible chances of success when they start law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, a question we frequently get from 0Ls or incoming 1Ls is: What should I read before starting law school?

Alison Monahan: Well, I love this question. I mean, there're certainly books and things we could recommend. I think my biggest advice is always just read something that's hard, that's challenging, and try to do it in a longer block of time than you might do if you're just cruising through the Internet on your phone. So I think this is a great opportunity to train that muscle for reading and get in the habit of sitting down and reading something difficult for long blocks of time. What do you think?

Lee Burgess: I totally agree. And I just did this exercise for myself recently, because you and I are working on some projects and I wanted to go audit a bunch of books. So I went to the library and I brought home a bunch of books, and I sat down and set goals for myself to read for hours. Which I don't really do anymore. I mean, I realize we work on the computer for hours, but sit down with a book and I read for hours. And then I took notes, because I wanted to share what I was reading with you. So, that was something I hadn't done in a long time. And at first it felt a little weird, because you realize that that is its own skill. But at the end of the second week, I'm telling you, I'm like, "I finished my fourth book. Here are my notes." And you're like, "Cool. That's great. Thanks for sharing." But it is a great

reminder that any of us can get back into that swing of this academic auditing. But I will tell you, I had to shut my computer. I was taking notes on my computer at times, but I turned off my phone and put it on silent. I turned off my notifications on my computer and I just did blocks of deep work, just like we tell our students to do. And it was pretty amazing how much I got done in a few weeks of really focused work.

Alison Monahan: It is really amazing. I was very impressed by how many books you were actually reading. I think Lee at this point has read every "how to do law school" book out there.

Lee Burgess: I think so.

Alison Monahan: We can maybe link to a couple of your favorites. But yeah, I sat down this weekend and picked up a paper copy of The New Yorker and read it almost cover-to-cover, and that also felt really weird, that I was just sitting on the couch, reading something. I think that is a habit a lot of people either A) never developed, or B) are out of the habit of doing.

Lee Burgess: I know. I thought about this too when I was on a plane recently and I chose not to pay for the Wi-Fi, and I realized that that was just going to be hours. And I also still on this book project, so I read for a long time. And we are really trained to just be constantly interrupted, and the speed at which we can work with focus is pretty amazing for most of us. I think all of us will work faster if we do it with focus. If you have any attention deficit issues, it's even more important, I think. But I was pleasantly surprised at how productive I could be when doing that focused deep work. Now, is it easy to keep that discipline past the couple intensive weeks I did that? Maybe not, but it's a worthwhile exercise.

Alison Monahan: But hey, and you're not going to law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. So, I did just audit a bunch of books in the "how to do law school" space, and I think some of them are great. I think if you really haven't had any experience with law school, you don't have any lawyers in your family – sure, I think that reading something that kind of explains the school system a little bit can be helpful. Some of them are very intimidating, some of them are very boring, some of them are very nuanced beyond what you need to know for those first days of law school. I mean, we have a Start Law School Right course as well, that focuses mostly on study skills. It is not like you need to do that to be successful on day one. I think it is much more important to be in the mindset of doing reading, doing some hard work. And if you want to learn about law school, that's great, but I don't think you need to pre-study or read casebooks or

torts summaries or anything like that. There's plenty of time to study that stuff in law school.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I think this is more time to get a basic understanding of what you're getting into if you don't already have that, and then start training that reading muscle. And it might be that you literally set a timer for 20 minutes one day, and then 40 minutes the next day, and then 60 minutes the next week, because I think it is a muscle that you really have to work and you have to be really cognizant of, "Am I being interrupted or am I actually focusing?" And I think that's the biggest thing that's probably going to help you be successful later in law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I was just talking about this recently with my son's elementary school teacher who, I will say elementary school teachers give some really great solid studying advice that all of us can own and incorporate. But we were talking about reading, as reading novels, and setting up time for our family to do basically dedicated reading time where we all do silent reading together. And then he said, "After the reading time, make sure you sit and you discuss some takeaways or some reflections on whatever you read, either the story or if it's a book about learning something." And then I realized that's what I was somewhat doing with my own note-taking with this book project, because I was trying to save you time, so I needed to have my notes make sense, because I wanted you to read them. But also, that's its own skill of like, "Oh, I read this, and what did I like about it?" And so, this idea too of reading and then writing down a few reflections, even if it's just a novel – I think that's another kind of muscle to practice and stretch a little bit, because that's really what you're doing in law school. You have to read something, you have to internalize it, and then you have to be able to talk about it, and I think that that is helpful. It'll also help with retention.

Alison Monahan: A hundred percent agree.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Oh, and you should read the *Mindset* book by Carol Dweck.

Alison Monahan: That's always a classic.

Lee Burgess: Always a classic.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's definitely a good one for your pre-law school summer. Alright, well, moving on to our next question. Stay tuned: What supplies and technology do I need to purchase over the summer?

Lee Burgess: Oh, this is always such a big one, because there is this feeling that everyone needs new stuff. But I feel like I'm always constantly asking students not to use new stuff.

Alison Monahan: "I need a whole new system." Maybe not.

Lee Burgess: Maybe not. You do need a working computer, because you're going to be doing computer work. So, if you don't have a stable computer... It doesn't need to be the fastest and most powerful computer, but it needs to be stable. It needs to be able to run Dropbox or some other kind of file backup system. You need stable Internet connection. You're going to be writing papers. And you're not doing really amazing...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, like heavy graphics.

Lee Burgess: Editing videos or something like that. But you do want it to be stable. So I think that's what I would say, is, if you do not have a stable computer, you probably want a stable computer. And most likely you're going to want to computer to sit for the bar when it comes bar time. And so, you also need a stable computer for that. So sometimes I like to have people think of it as like, if you're in law school for three years, you definitely are going to at some point need a computer that's very stable for the bar. So, you time it out looking at that horizon.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that makes sense. If you have a perfectly functional computer, there's no reason to buy another one right now for law school. You can buy one in a couple of years, and then use that for the bar. Outside of the tech realm, I think thinking about ways to stay organized, and whether some of those are physical is a great idea. So, one of our favorite notebooks, for example, for taking notes, is the Circa system. We don't get paid to endorse them unfortunately, but we do love them. We do love them. So, whether it's going to be a bunch of legal pads or something like that, but I think there's a strong argument to look at taking notes by hand. You can also have the sort of tech by hand. Forgot what those things I sent to you are called. But anyway, there're certain things you can write on.

Lee Burgess: There's the Kindle Scribe and then there's another one that's its own thing.

Alison Monahan: Which I'm forgetting the name of, but anyway, some people love those, some people don't. But thinking through what are your systems going to look like, I think is a great idea. And that includes even almost silly things like tabs and highlighters. I went through an insane amount of highlighters, because I book briefed everything, so I had to have my four to five colors on me at all times. But

stuff like that, I think sounds crazy to worry about, but those are the sort of things that you can think through, kind of what's worked for you in the past, how are you going to tab your notes or your books or anything like that. And just go ahead and get all that set up now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also for fun read, besides books about law school, books about organization and executive functioning. I mean, I'm like the best dinner party guest. It's like, "Don't you want to hear about what I've been working on?"

Alison Monahan: Seriously.

Lee Burgess: But one of the things that I find interesting is, there is this push to put together a binder, to go back to these old school techniques that you and I grew up with. In this one book I read, she was talking about those little whole punch reinforcement rings. Do you remember those?

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah.

Lee Burgess: To make sure that the pages wouldn't fall out or if it ripped out, you could do the little holes.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you could patch it, basically.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And I had totally forgotten about those. I remember having those in my binder. I mean, we're not talking like trapper keepers, but an actual three-ring binder. But I will say that it is an interesting question to say, how are you going to manage the paperwork in your life? If you're going to take paper notes, how are you going to organize them and make sure you don't lose them? If your professors are giving you handouts in class – even though some professors will do things electronically in PowerPoint – what are you going to do with those? How are you going to make sure they don't get lost? Don't just start shoving them in a folder, or then you just have a folder full of disorganized stuff, which is terrible too. So, I think it's a good idea to kind of assess what you've done in the past that has worked for you. And if you had an organizational scheme in undergrad, you should keep it. Don't toss it. But if you didn't, if you were able to just keep all of the plates spinning in undergrad, it's possible you won't be able to in law school. So, I think sometimes it can be easy, as easy as a whole punch. What we love about the Levenger Circa notebooks is there's a special type of whole punch, which basically allows you to do the same thing, but it's not as bulky as a binder. There are lots of options, but you definitely couldn't find yourself swimming in papers or emails from your class or supplemental things. And then when it comes time to outline, you're kind of like, "What, did my professor send me something? I don't remember."

Alison Monahan: Right. Well, that makes me think too, even if you don't have a paper organizational system, because you don't have that much paper, you also need to have an organizational system for these types of documents electronically. So, if you're getting emails or you're getting, I even think of things like student loans, this is really important information that you're going to need to access later. So just go ahead and have some sort of backup, whether it's Dropbox or whatever you want. But have all that stuff go into that now, so that you're not looking for it years from now.

Lee Burgess: Yes. And I will say, and I use this I feel like almost every day, is the "Scan to Dropbox" feature on my phone. Basically, almost anything that comes in that's on paper gets scanned to Dropbox and then shredded, because one, I don't want to keep paper, but also, if you just get into that habit, then whenever you're looking for something, I can be pretty sure that it's been scanned to a file in Dropbox. You just have to create these habits for yourself so things don't get too sloppy. Even Bluebooks, Bluebooks love to be tabbed. A physical Bluebook a lot of people find is easier than the electronic Bluebook. You probably need to use both. You also want to have a solid backpack or a rolling bag. How are you going to carry all that stuff? I mean, it sounds silly, but it's really hard, it's heavy. You end up carrying a lot of stuff.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I remember before I went to law school, I went to a store in San Francisco and they made custom messenger bags and I picked out my colors and I was really happy with it. Then I put all these books in it. It was like, "Wow, this was not the best choice." But I did carry it for multiple years, through all of law school, even though in retrospect, having a normal backpack or something probably would've made more sense.

Lee Burgess: I also started law school with a Timbuk2 messenger bag, but I ended up having the messenger bag and then all my books in my arms, or sometimes also a purse, and my lunch. It's a lot of stuff.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, out of pride I refused to get rid of that bag, but I recognize that it was probably not the best choice. So, be practical.

Lee Burgess: Be practical. This is not like your coolest moment. This is a practical moment. Okay. Another question that we often hear is: How to set up your study space? You may be setting up a new apartment, a new bedroom with roommates. So, what are your favorite study space tips?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think if you're going to be studying in a bedroom, you want to really carve out space to do this on an ongoing basis. If you're going to be studying somewhere else in a house – again, try to carve space out where you can leave things. I mean, I had a hybrid system, so I had a desk in my room where I did a lot of stuff, and then after dinner, usually, we had a very small dining room with a small dining table that me and my roommate had gone to IKEA on day one to get. Cheapest IKEA dining table – not comfortable, but we did use it for three years and I read a lot of my cases there. But I think you want to have something that you can do habitually, whether that is, go to a particular area of campus, the law library. I personally did not like to study at the law library, so I went to a lot of other libraries. But you want to kind of have your cycle of places that you're going to go, for when you get bored with one of them, you can go to another. And different people thrive on different levels of stimulation when they're studying. Some people need to be very focused, no sound. I studied better usually with some ambient noise. So, kind of know yourself and then figure out those options that are going to work for you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think it is definitely good to have options, and also learn about what your school has to offer. They have often quiet study rooms where you don't have digital devices, or that people aren't allowed to talk at all. You have the study rooms that you can reserve. So sometimes if you have a study group or a few friends, you can even go use those spaces. So I think it's also a good time in the beginning and during orientation, find out what's available to you and then, yeah, align it with what works for you. And I used to eat and I used to read at my dining table. I had a very tiny dining table that I bought off of Craigslist for like $10, and the cutest yet most uncomfortable chairs at that dining table. So, the only thing I will say is, you will spend a lot of time sitting. And so if you're going to invest in something for your workspace, make sure that it is a chair that you can sit in, that is not going to ruin your back.

Alison Monahan: I think that's so true. And also, I think having something maybe like a laptop tray. You're going to be doing a lot of writing, and you really want to pay attention to these ergonomics to the extent you can, because even something as simple as a particular type of $30 mouse might save you from getting carpal tunnel, and that's going to be huge.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think you and I both use laptop risers.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I've got a whole thing, because if I'm at a different place, if I'm in, say, my Tahoe place, if I start sitting at the desk a lot and typing a lot, I immediately start to feel like, "Ooh, my wrists are not feeling great. My forearms hurt, my back is hurting." And it's just because the ergonomics there are frankly not that great.

Lee Burgess: You've got to work on your study space.

Alison Monahan: I know. I've been working on it year over year, it's getting better. But yeah, these are things that you may not really think about that much, but having a good chair and a solid laptop setup, where your neck doesn't have a lot of torque in it, and your hands are aligned properly, is definitely worth paying attention to.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also will say that once you really up that computer time and that reading time, when you end up being hunched over, your phone time, you might also find it is starting to be really hard on your hands and your wrists. Oftentimes we spend a lot of time on our phones, but we're not doing all the reading and writing that you're required to do in law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Or even it may impact your eyes. My eye doctor once when I left my law firm job was like, "Oh, your eyes just got better. What happened?" And I'm like, "Oh, I'm not reading on a computer screen 12 hours a day anymore." She's like, "Yep, that would do it."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think I had a similar conversation with my eye doctor after I left my BigLaw job. So there are a lot of considerations. I think my biggest thing is whatever you set up for yourself, make sure it works for you. Really be honest about where the distractions are in minimizing those, because I think that is really part of the key.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. You want to have a space that you can go to and your brain is going to say, "Alright, this is where we study, or this is one of the places that we study", and you're going to be able to get things done, because you don't want to be wasting time. No one has time for that in law school.

Lee Burgess: No, no. Okay, next up, let's talk a little bit about mindset, and what mindset should someone adopt before starting law school?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think this is a great question. I think a lot of people feel apprehensive, maybe nervous, maybe scared even. I think all these are valid. You might also feel excited, sometimes you can reframe nervousness as excitement. But I think, frankly, I'm not sure most people really understand what they're getting ready to start doing or get into. So I think there also are a lot of misconceptions around what law school will be like. But I think the best mindset is really embracing this as a challenge and something that you're going to be able to get

through, with the understanding that it's going to take some work, it's probably going to have some difficult moments, but you know that you can do this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think we mentioned the Carol Dweck book on mindset, which is kind of still seen as one of the quality discussions on this topic. I would say that if I had to think about one thing you really want to think about going into law school is resilience.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Everyone is going to be challenged by something. It could be in law school, it could be life. Something will deliver that will make this a challenging experience for you. And you have to be resilient, because life doesn't stop for law school, but law school also doesn't stop for life. And I think that setting yourself up for that resilience is also really important. So you have to ask yourself what you can do to do that. Maybe that is making sure you have mental health support and that you have a therapist that you like, or engaging with student services early in the semester so you have mental health support before you're finding that you are struggling with anxiety or getting depressed or having insomnia, or one of the many things that we see with law students. But you also may know that there are certain non-negotiables that keep you resilient. Maybe you're an avid runner, or you like to go on long walks, or you need to spend time with your dog. Whatever it might be, it doesn't really matter, but you need to be honest with yourself so you can build that into your schedule. And then that's going to help you show up to be the best possible version of yourself. And I think that if you can do that, then you can weather the bumps, and hopefully keep a little perspective, because I think that the perspective keeping is also really hard when you're in this pressure cooker and everyone is super stressed out and acting like every single thing is life or death. And the reality is, it is hard, but every single thing is not life or death.

Alison Monahan: No. I mean, very little in law school is truly life or death. It's hard to think of much of anything. Yeah, so I think understanding that this is going to be a new experience, you're probably going to feel uncomfortable at points, you might even feel super lost in the beginning, you might feel really frustrated. But setting kind of realistic expectations going in. There's the classic survey that I saw once, I think it was 50% of incoming law students thought they'd be in the top 10% of the class and 90% thought they'd be in the top half or something. I mean, those numbers do not make sense. So, the reality is, you don't really control the outcome, because everything's on a curve. And I think that's a challenge for a lot of people to really internalize, is that not everybody's going to get an A. Very few people are going to get an A, and that's okay. You don't

need to get an A to get through law school. You don't need to get an A to get a job. These things will come to you regardless, basically. So, you've got to kind of be open to these new ideas, to these new ways of thinking and learning, but also to this new evaluation system that frankly is not very fun.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah, and you have to just weather that.

Alison Monahan: Right, roll with it.

Lee Burgess: Roll with it. Do your best. We often will say, the grades will fall where they may, right? We have no control over exactly what scores we get. All we can do is show up and give it the best chance that we can with the best preparation we can. And so I think if you can just keep that in mind, that your goal is to show up for those final exams, as prepared as you can be, with a good mindset and giving it your all – then the grades will fall where they may. But you should feel pretty good about the effort that you put in, and I think that's really your best case scenario.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I would add having slept, having eaten, having done all of the things that you need to do to show up in a condition to take that exam. That does not mean pulling three all-nighters in a row and eating nothing for two days because you're too busy to cook. That is not putting yourself in the best possible position. So these are all things that need to be thought about when you're thinking about how you want to approach this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, that is a great segue into our last question for today, which is: What practical life arrangements should I make before classes begin? Because this is really, I think, how you can keep your own personal system up and running, right?

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Making sure that you're fed and you're moving your body and you have a good living situation. All of these things can really be set up before school starts.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think these are things that you want to think about over the summer, because once school starts, it's going to be a lot harder to think about them. So, hopefully, if people have been living on their own in university or whatnot, you have some sense of how to take care of yourself. But it might've been that you were just eating on campus every day and you didn't really pay attention to that. Law schools vary – some have meal plans, some don't. But I

think it's fair to say you're probably going to be doing more of your own life arrangements than you did in undergrad.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, which means you've got to feed yourself. And although there will be a lot of pizza on campus, you don't want to eat that pizza all the time.

Alison Monahan: No.

Lee Burgess: It's not going to make you feel very good.

Alison Monahan: No. I think even figuring out how you're going to do meal planning and if you're not familiar with cooking basic things, the summer's a great time to learn that. It doesn't have to be anything super complicated, but if there are meals that you like, ask someone to teach them to you so you can make them yourself. For one thing that's going to save you a ton of money, most places, than eating out all the time.

Lee Burgess: Yes, and doing batch cooking. So, you cook on the weekends and then you have food for much of the week. I think that's really great. If you are not a great chef and you do not enjoy making your own food, which is totally fine, I do think it's important then you figure out what else you can do. So, a lot of times your loved ones in your life will ask what they can do to help, and it's possible that you could say, "Could you freeze me some meals? Can you make me soups and have just soups in my freezer?" Or portions of lasagna, or whatever it is that you like to eat. But I do think that that's a great way to allow people to show up for you in a way that would be really helpful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. And I do think people want to do that type of thing. They might fund you some type of meal program. If you're willing to open up a bunch of plastic bags and throw it together in a pan, you can do HelloFresh or something.

Lee Burgess: It's true.

Alison Monahan: And maybe that's training wheels to get you started, or maybe do it a couple times a week. But I do think just thinking through, "Where am I going to get groceries? How am I going to store them? How am I going to cook them?" What do your cooking facilities even look like? Depending on what your housing looks like, that might vary a lot. You might be in a dorm style thing with a shared kitchen, or you might be in an apartment that has a full kitchen, who knows? But all of these things I think are worth looking into, because again, if you have to furnish the kitchen, then you need to get pots and pans or whatever it is. You

want to understand the situation that you're going to be in, so that you can plan accordingly and not be shocked at the last minute and say, "Oh my gosh, I'm not going to have access to a refrigerator. What?" That's not great when suddenly you're trying to start classes.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's so true. I also think it's important to keep in mind, what is your support system going to look like? I think that if you're relocating, especially for law school, it can be hard to not have your friends or family around. So, you may want to carve out time to hang out with new people and make new friends. I was reading an interesting book, I can't remember which one, I've read a lot of books recently. But it was talking about how many hours it takes as an adult to make a good friend, and I'm just going to throw numbers out that I think are right. But it was something like a hundred hours to make an initial friendship connection. And as a child or an undergrad, you spend a hundred hours with somebody really fast. It does not take that long. But as an adult, a hundred hours talking to someone is actually a really long time. I wonder how many hours we've talked to each other over the last decade, plus.

Alison Monahan: Oh my goodness. Many.

Lee Burgess: Many, many. But I thought that was interesting, because you do see adult friendships, it takes longer, but part of it is we just don't have as much time. And so it may feel hard to create some new relationships, and you may feel a little lonely or that you haven't found your people. So you want to either find your people through different activities, maybe outside of law school, or just know that you can rely on your other support network to get you through until you do develop some of those friendships.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I was going to say, I think it's difficult, but also beneficial to try to develop some relationships that are not solely based on law school. Because yeah, you get thrown in and you're going to spend a hundred hours together really quickly, but then you also end up in this very pressure cooker situation where everyone's concerned about the same things, everyone's competing for the same things. And those people can be great supports, don't get me wrong. But I think it's also nice to have somebody outside of that, whether it's in an activity that has nothing to do with law school or something like that, that you can go to and say, "Hey, I just need a breather. Can we go take a walk around the park with our dogs or whatever, and not talk about law school?", because I think it does become so all-encompassing for people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think it's great to have a little bit of perspective. Now, sometimes it can be frustrating. I typically would date people not in law school, and then you'd

have to have some conversation about study time where I'd be like, "Okay, I will not see you for a week." And I remember this one guy being like, "But we can see each other on Saturday?" I was like, "No, no, I have to do work. I'm sorry. I will not see you. Sorry." He was not particularly understanding. He did not last very long.

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, fair. Yeah, and I don't even want to get started on dating your classmates.

Lee Burgess: That's its own thing.

Alison Monahan: That's a whole another podcast.

Lee Burgess: That's a whole another podcast.

Alison Monahan: Just maybe put that to the side for the first semester. Just going to say.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also think it's really important to take a look at your finances. If you are living off of loans, you may want to make sure that you understand what that is. If you've never had a budget, if you've just been able to kind of make it work, it might be a great time over the summer to set up You Need A Budget. We have some great podcast episodes from You Need A Budget about how to think about money and being a student. I think those are really powerful, and if you've never spent time thinking about that, I think that's a great thing to do over the summer.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely, everyone in law school needs a budget. You only have a certain amount of money to make it to the end of the semester. You need to be able to eat at the end of the semester, so figure that out. And I think things like just basically basic scheduling: How are you going to have time to work on things? When are you going to do other things? Those are things you can start doing now, in the summer. You can't probably get the exact dates of your classes, but you can get a general sense of what your week is going to look like. What are you going to plan to do on the weekends? Do you have a block to do your laundry and errands? I think that's totally legitimate. Are you going to take some time off every weekend? You can go ahead and put that into your schedule and then adjust it later, but at least you have something to start with.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And just know what you really need. Maybe there are some hacks, right? How do you do laundry the most efficiently? Especially if you've already relocated, figuring out how you're going to do that. Or some cities, wash and fold is much more practical than using a laundromat.

Alison Monahan: So many people in New York did that, just because our laundry situation was not great. And again, it depends on what you have. If you have an apartment with a built-in washer dryer – yay for you! That's not a problem. If you're in an apartment in New York City and they have three coin ops for the entire building and two of them aren't working most of the time, that's a different problem.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also think that looking at your transportation, how are you going to get places? If you're moving to a new city and perhaps you're not going to have a car, do you understand how you're going to get everywhere? Especially carrying all the books, because it's a lot of stuff to carry. So walking for an hour may not be that pleasant if you have to haul a ton of stuff with you. So I think that's really important, as well as of course figuring out a housing arrangement. You don't want to be couch surfing at the beginning of the semester. I definitely had a friend second year who slept in my living room on the floor for three weeks because he couldn't get an apartment.

Alison Monahan: No, one of my roommates my second year who came in as a first-year, they didn't have space for her for the first three weeks, and she just showed up at our door one day and I'm like, "What have you been doing for the last almost month?" She's like, "Oh yeah, just sleeping on people's couches." That's not a great way to start things. It wasn't her fault, but at the same time I was like, "That's pretty sh*tty."

Lee Burgess: If you can avoid it, avoid that experience.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: I think the other thing, along with your support network and trying to create good habits is, make sure that you've got your sleep hygiene and your whatever sort of movement, workout routines. Go to all those doctor's appointments over the summer. Please don't do the eye doctor and the dentist and your gyno appointments and your annual physical like in September. That's just not a really great use of your time.

Alison Monahan: No, and I think the same with your car. You want to make sure you've got your oil changed and everything's up to date and you have new wiper blades. Anything that you think you could need in the next four months, just go ahead and try to get it done now.

Lee Burgess: Did you delay getting the REAL ID? Now's your moment. Go do it. I've done this years ago, but I think there are a lot of people who haven't done it yet.

Alison Monahan: I know you made me do it years ago, and when this came around I was like, "Wait, didn't everyone do this years ago?" I'm like, "Oh, I guess not everyone has a Lee in their life."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. So, those things can be a huge time waster and a stressor when you're already stressed with school. So anything you can do to lighten your load. And I think my last consideration here would be, everyone's going to ask you what they can do to help – that's what family and friends do. And so, have some answers for them. If it's food, ask them to make meals. If it's to take your dog for a walk, ask them that. If it's to have a soothing phone call, if it's to buy you DoorDash gift cards. Whatever it might be, just give them a suggestion of what could be helpful. I'm sure you can think of something that would be helpful. And you just want to get the help that you need, to really set you up for success.

Alison Monahan: I agree. It's a team effort, so let the team help.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Well, I think we're about out of time. Any final thoughts for getting your life ready for law school?

Alison Monahan: I would just say, try to think of all the things that you think might come up in the next six months, whether that's having medicine that you need or appointments or whatever, and just try to get as much of it either automated or taken care of now, so that you can really clear your plate and commit wholeheartedly to this new experience.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I would also say, have a little fun.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, totally.

Lee Burgess: The summer before law school is also a great time to go on a trip, take that road trip you've wanted to take. I had been working, so I had some disposable income and I went to Costa Rica for part of July, before I went to law school, and we had a blast. I recently was going through those pictures. It was fun to go do something completely different and be somewhere completely new, and it just felt like a good sendoff. So, I think trying to find some space to have some fun, to blow off some steam, and to kind of reward yourself for getting ready to go do something hard.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I agree. And also, see all of your friends that you might not see for a while, whether you have happy hours or whatever. Make that little bit of effort, I think, then you'll have a nice memory to look back on when you're miserable in the library in November and thinking, "Why in the world did I do this?" And then

you can probably call that person and they'll be like, "You know what? This is what you told me in that happy hour, so I'm going to echo that back to you now."

Lee Burgess: Yes. And then you can do as my good friend did to me, and say, "Wow, you should really not wear that fleece anymore. You've been wearing that fleece for like a month."

Alison Monahan: We need our friends sometimes to point these things out to us.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, she's like, "Don't you have any other clothes in your closet, friend?"

Alison Monahan: Maybe I'll send you a new sweater.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Alright, well, with that, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review 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!

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