Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are excited to have Lindsay Scola back on the podcast to explain to us why sleep is important to your productivity. 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, please 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.

Hi, this is Lee from the Law School Toolbox. Welcome back! Today we are so excited to have a returning guest, Lindsay Scola, to talk about sleep and productivity, and why these things are all connected, and why we should all go take a nap after this podcast.

Lindsay Scola: I mean, yeah.

Lee Burgess: Perfect.

Lindsay Scola: I'm so happy to be back!

Lee Burgess: I know, thank you so much. Well, I feel like I did the opposite thing that I should before doing a sleep podcast, because I went out late last night and so I didn't get enough sleep, and then I went and got a coffee smoothie before our podcast.

Lindsay Scola: You know what? It is a okay, because this is the thing – we're going to talk today about why we're humans, and that some days we are humans and we do the thing that we need to do to be humans, and we're going to take the stress out of sleep.

Lee Burgess: Perfect. And sometimes you have to have the coffee smoothie.

Lindsay Scola: Sometimes you've got to have a coffee smoothie. I've got no problem with your coffee smoothie.

Lee Burgess: Alright, for folks who have not listened to your other podcasts that we've done together, why do you care about sleep? Why do you talk about sleep? Who are you and what do you do?

Lindsay Scola: Why do I tell it to strangers in the Starbucks line when I'm picking up my order? I sleep all the time. So, I actually hated sleep for a very long time. I thought that sleep was the enemy towards my productivity, and I thought that being tired was the cost of ambition; that meant I was doing it right. When I was 16, I started having these bouts of just being otherwise engaged and then getting excessively sleepy. Sleep would hit me like a hammer and I would just get this little voice in my head that's like, "If you don't go to sleep right now, you're going to die." And I would go in the bathroom and I'd curl up on a stall and I put my head against the wall, and I take a 15-minute nap and I'd feel better. And I told my doctor about this and my doctor said, "You're busy, and busy people are tired." And I took that with me into my career, and I am working for the future president and then the president of the United States, and I spent a lot of years doing advance for President Obama. And I was with the best and the brightest and the busiest, and I never saw them sneaking into the bathroom to nap.

Lee Burgess: That wasn't like a typical afternoon for you all?

Lindsay Scola: That wasn't a typical thing, but everybody was tired. And of course, you're tired. You're pulling all-nighters, you're staffing the future president of the United States every four to six days. Everybody was tired. So I thought I was, one, bad at being tired; and two, I know what it feels like to think you are falling behind because of something as basic as being tired. And that really stuck with me. I thought I didn't want it enough, I thought I wasn't as ambitious as I thought I was, and I really held onto this as who I was. I ended up getting diagnosed with narcolepsy when I was 35, which is a chronic neurological condition of the sleep-wake cycle. And so, I can feel excessively sleepy during the day and have trouble sleeping at night. When I got that diagnosis, I didn't just learn I had a sleep disorder, which one in five of us do. I learned I didn't know anything about sleep. And it turns out, most of us don't know anything about sleep. We never learned about it in school. It was just this one and done thing, which is so wild when you think about it, because we spend a third of our life doing this thing that we don't know what it does for us. Most of us think that it's a waste of time, and we don't know what to do about it when it feels bad. So I, one, went down a quest to figure out my own sleep and what narcolepsy really was and how to work with it and how to be living my best life with narcolepsy. But I wanted to take that message bigger, because one in three of us have an issue with sleep at some point in our life. That's a lot of really tired people. Sleep is a $64 billion a year industry in the United States alone. People are spending a lot of money because they're super tired. But if we don't know what sleep does for us, we don't know how to work with our sleep, if we don't know how to sleep – we're just going to keep throwing money at fancy gadgets and gummies and weighted blankets without actually having the tools to make us better sleepers,

because sleep isn't the thing that gets in the way of your productivity. It's the thing that makes everything else possible.

Lee Burgess: Just ask anyone who's had a small child who doesn't sleep. That is my life. They're not small anymore. I mean, they're not big either. They're medium size, really. But I had never had sleep deprivation like I had when I had a new baby, where I didn't sleep for years, basically. And it just rocks your world. And I'm a light sleeper. I'm not one of those people who can sleep anywhere or sleep anytime. And so, you take away your nighttime sleep and you are a fraction of a human. It is really scary.

Lindsay Scola: Yeah, and we celebrate that. And what's really wild is that you go a period of time, like 20 hours being awake, you're the same as somebody who's legally drunk. And it's not okay to go to work and be like, "Guys, I am loaded. I have been drinking for four days straight, but I got this presentation done." But it's totally okay to be like, "Guys, I've maybe slept three hours this whole week, but I got the presentation done." And you're like, "Oh man, you're a superstar." And so, we've got a really weird relationship with telling people that they should have self-care, but also rewarding people who don't sleep. And so that's why I'm a big believer that sleep isn't self-care. Self-care implies that there's some sort of choice on it. Sleep is survival. Sleep is the base of everything else that you're going to do. It's not like you can choose, "I'm going to eat healthy and I'm going to exercise, and maybe I'll work on my sleep too." None of that stuff matters if you're not sleeping.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I was reading a chapter in a book yesterday that was about sleep and cognitive performance, and it's echoing what you said – that one in three people is not sleeping enough, is sleeping less than six hours a night. And I think that for folks listening to this podcast who are possibly in law school – you are probably pushing the boundaries of that sleep, because a lot of times you stay up and work late at the library, you're not keeping regular hours. But one in three people sleeping less than six hours a night sounded pretty extreme to me, but it seems like that's really what it is.

Lindsay Scola: Yeah, we are a society that doesn't value sleep. And so you've got sort of a mix of issues. You've got the people who think that they need to hustle harder, and so they're doing everything so that they don't have to sleep. And then you've got the people who are struggling with their sleep and don't have the tools to get the sleep that they want. And then you've got one in five people with a sleep disorder that are only diagnosed at 18%. And so we're talking restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea and narcolepsy and idiopathic hypersomnia. And you just think you're a bad sleeper, and there's no such thing as a bad sleeper. We just haven't gotten you the right tools. And for those one in five people, they

need medical intervention. There are sleep specialists. They need somebody to help them treat the condition that they have. And I'm living proof that once you get treatment for that, your life is amazing.

Lee Burgess: You haven't slept in a bathroom recently?

Lindsay Scola: I have not slept in a bathroom recently. I am still a big believer in naps, but I choose when and where to nap, so I have not had a bathroom nap recently. Sometimes when it's a big, crazy day and you don't have a lot of options on napping... I did take some very clever naps at Disneyland a couple of months ago, but I wore my Minnie ears while I was doing it.

Lee Burgess: So it was on brand, basically.

Lindsay Scola: It was on brand. I'm good at naps, it's a thing. And napping is actually really good for most of us. Napping is very good for your health. It's good for your blood pressure, it's good for cognition. You can literally sleep on it. The rules for napping is you want to nap 10 to 20 minutes max, because you don't want to get into a deeper cycle of your sleep. We sleep in about 90-minute cycles and once you go past the 30-minute mark, you're looking at deeper sleep. Deep sleep and REM sleep. And we don't want to wake up in the middle of that, because then you're going to wake up groggy and feeling worse than you did before you laid down. So, I tell people to set an alarm for 25 minutes because most people do not fall asleep the minute their head hits the pillow. If you do, we need to chat. But that gives you a little bit of time to fall asleep, hit that perfect 10 to 20-minute window, and then wake up and go on with the rest of your day. Caveat: If you struggle to fall asleep at night, skip napping, take a brain break instead. Go do something very light. Play a little game on your phone, take a little walk. Don't push yourself on the walk, but let your brain just rest for a moment and skip the nap.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, I'm not a very good napper. I wish I could. I had a roommate once who was a very high-level competitive rower, and all through college they would row at like 6:00 in the morning, all these crazy times. So he could sleep anywhere. Like, anytime, anywhere. He had just really trained himself, because starting in college he had to be able to sleep when other people were awake. And I was just always amazed that you'd find him napping, and I'm like, "How do you do that?" He's like, "I'm just well-trained. It became important to my performance."

Lindsay Scola: We don't always want to look at being able to sleep anywhere and everywhere as a goal.

Lee Burgess: True. But there are just people who are better at more skills.

Lindsay Scola: Because sometimes that can be an indicator of a sleep disorder. My family just thought that I was a really good sleeper. Flight's delayed, Lindsay's sleeping on the floor of the airport.

Lee Burgess: That's not the recliner in the living room.

Lindsay Scola: No, the recliner in the living room is fine for a nap, but...

Lee Burgess: A little more room.

Lindsay Scola: If you're sleeping anywhere and everywhere – literally cars you're not driving in...

Lee Burgess: That's a little much. A little much.

Lindsay Scola: But no, otherwise, napping is excellent. And we've got tools for when you do have an issue falling asleep. We've got so many tools.

Lee Burgess: One thing I was thinking about while we were chatting was just this visibility around sleep. I know that for about a year I've been an Oura ring user, which does track my sleep, and I have found it to be very interesting, because I love data. And it does keep you honest because you can't manipulate the data. It also is sad when you don't sleep well, it gives you feedback.

Lindsay Scola: We're going to talk about that, yep.

Lee Burgess: But what has been helpful for me is just creating visibility around this issue, because we can tell ourselves all sorts of stories about how much we sleep or how long we lay in bed to fall asleep. What do you think about these kinds of tools we have to track sleep? Are they helpful? Can they go overboard?

Lindsay Scola: So, my thing with the tech is that I'm really happy people are talking about sleep and valuing their sleep. The problem with the tech is that how my sleep is – I'm the best indicator of that. So, I know if I am sleeping well, if I am feeling good when I wake up and throughout the day. You can have people who wake up and feel fine and then they look at their score and suddenly they feel terrible. And so sometimes that data can backfire on us. And especially if you're someone who's dealing with insomnia right now, having this constant data that's telling you something that you already know is making more stress for you. And so many of our problems around insomnia are really that we've trained our brain that we think we can't sleep, and it's a repetitive cycle. And so, when you're

looking at so much data, it can actually backfire on your sleep. So what I want for people is to give some easy tools that they can use to work on their sleep before we start focusing too much on data. Because if you're sleeping fine and you're really interested, "If I work out at different times of day, how much deep sleep I'm getting" – that's totally great. And so if you are worried you're not going to fall asleep when you go to your bed at night, knowing that something is tracking that information that you're already worried about is going to backfire.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I do think it's an interesting way to keep people honest about other habits, like you were mentioning about. If you work out late and your sleep is a little iffy, if you are drinking, even if you drink a little versus a lot, I think that's interesting if you've never had visibility into that, because that changes how we can sleep. Eating a heavy meal too late. If you're not in that catalog of folks where it's stress-inducing, it can help you find some of these patterns, whereas you may not even know that eating late affects your sleep, because oftentimes as a student you do eat at weird hours. And maybe that 10:00 o'clock pizza isn't setting you up for success. Like everything, it's a balance, right? We're all Type A, we can all take it to a really compulsive place.

Lindsay Scola: Totally. But this is why in my work and with my new course, which I know we're going to talk about, I like to talk about this instead of sleep hygiene, as a sleep blueprint, where we are recognizing the things that we need for our human brain that are going to help us. Because my issue with the term "sleep hygiene", especially as someone that took 19 years to get a sleep disorder diagnosis, is that it feels like a list of things we have to do or we're doomed to be a crappy sleeper for the rest of our life. And instead, I want people to think of what their brain is going to need and give their brain that thing. So it's not, "Oh my God, I didn't check off the thing on the list. I don't have to do any of the rest of them because I've already messed it up for the night." But we're really creating habits and patterns for ourselves, because our brains are constantly scanning for clues. Clues that we're supposed to be awake, clues that we're going to sleep, the clue that I'm working, the clue that it's time to wind down. So, you know that moment when you're not thinking about dinner and then you smell something wafting from the kitchen and suddenly you're starving – that's the power of cues. And that's what we want to do when we're winding down for the evening. So it's not like there's an exact time that I need to shut off the TV and an exact time that I need to change the type of light that I'm getting. It's really more like, at a certain time, I change my clothes, so my body knows we're definitely not going out. I change locations, I go to a different room in the house. I switch from overhead lights to a lamp. So, just little cues like that. I really like scent. LA is really dry this year, so we've been using a humidifier. So we put scent in the humidifier at night, and that gives my brain a cue that we're starting to wrap up. I'm a late-night person. I'm most creative at night, I work best at night. But I set

a timer on my phone to wash my face and brush my teeth, and that's an indicator to my brain: "We're not going to bed right now, but the process is going to start soon."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's a great point. And we mentioned we were going to connect this to productivity. A lot happens when you're sleeping. One of the reasons why you need time to sleep is that our brains are designed to do stuff because you may be sleeping, but your brain is not not working. It is consolidating memories, it is actually solving problems and struggling with things you were struggling with for the day. There's all sorts of stuff that's happening in your brain when you sleep. And so if you cheat it out of this opportunity to do these processes, you are just not going to be able to be as productive or move forward in the tasks that you were working on the day before.

Lindsay Scola: Absolutely. So our brain is doing different things throughout our cycle of sleep. So we sleep in these 90-minute cycles, we're getting between four and six of them a night, depending on how long we're sleeping. And each part of that cycle does something different. So, you are improving your immune system, your muscles are recovering, your brain is actually consolidating memories and connecting dots together. That one, I wish I could go back to college and tell myself, "Please stop doing all-night cramming sessions, because you might remember things for the test, but they are gone the next day." And there is so much from college that I wish I remembered, but I'm never going to remember it because I was doing a million things, and I would think that I could learn everything from an entire semester the night before. And I did okay that way, but it doesn't stay in your long-term memory at all. The term "sleep on it" really should be something that you take with you, because you're way more likely to remember something if you actually get the right amount of sleep. And then our brains are also clearing out the garbage. So, we collect chemicals throughout the day and our brain needs time to wash those out. And if we don't, we see a connection between certain diseases later on that have to do with cognition, because of that. So, a lot is happening for our brain and our body at that time that we need to make sure that it gets the time to do.

Lee Burgess: And there have been interesting studies. You and I were emailing with this in prep for this podcast about this one study that came out of Stanford where they had basketball players sleep extra time – they were saying, I think it was at 10 hours night. And then they were measuring their physical improvement. And the book I was reading talked about their shot accuracy went up 9%, which I always loved numbers like that, because like it was an increase of 9%.

Lindsay Scola: It's like a 9% bump in free throws.

Lee Burgess: Yes, it was free throws and oh, and three-point shots. Three-point shots.

Lindsay Scola: The reaction time went up. Sprint time went up too.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I can't even remember the last time I slept 10 hours.

Lindsay Scola: You don't need to sleep 10 hours.

Lee Burgess: Right, you don't need to sleep 10 hours, which I think is an interesting point. But I did find this idea interesting that even people who are taking care of their bodies, probably at peak performance, sleep even increased their peak performance. And I think that's an interesting idea.

Lindsay Scola: Oh, absolutely. You need sleep to do the thing. So, you've got athletes that are naturally gifted at these things, but if they're focusing on their sleep, their muscles are recovering better, their immune system is recovering better, and they're going to be more taken care of, which is why we're starting to see more sports teams actually focus on players understanding their sleep better, so that they can perform better. And we should all take this away, because it doesn't matter if your skill has to do with your ability to throw a three-point shot or you're using your brain for something. Our peak performance happens because we give our brain the time to do this. And a note on the hours – yes, that study was 10 hours. The majority of us need to sleep between seven and nine hours. Some people are going to be down at the six-hour mark, some people are going to be up at the 10-hour mark. The eight-hour number is completely random. It came up because it's the top of a bell curve. So when you map that out...

Lee Burgess: It's like the 10,000 steps. It's just a number.

Lindsay Scola: Exactly, it is just the number in the middle. So, I tell people, "Don't focus on the number. Focus on you sleeping long enough to feel good." So, pick your wake up time and then don't go to bed until you feel sleepy. And then you'll start figuring out how much sleep you need based on that, and keep your wake up time the same every day, no matter if it's a weekend or a weekday. And I know this can be really tricky for students because you feel like you can catch up on the weekend, but what happens is that if we start moving our wake up time more than an hour or two, you're actually giving yourself jet lag without leaving your apartment, because your body has to then catch up come Monday. And so Monday is going to feel absolutely brutal when you do that. So, the same rule for napping goes over the weekend too. Don't decide to take a three-hour nap on the weekend when you don't normally do that. And try to keep your wake up time as similar as possible, so that you're feeling as well as you can throughout the week.

Lee Burgess: And I think this is an interesting push/pull when you're in a graduate program like law school, because you may feel like there are a lot of social things that you want to be a part of, you know? And a lot of those happen at night, but there's a cost to being out till midnight or 1:00 o'clock, and maybe drinking on top of that, which also influences your sleep, right? And so, I don't know, how do you encourage people to think about that push/pull of, if you're doing something intellectually hard like being in law school, and that is the overarching goal that you are working towards, and you want to have fun, you want to be going to do all these other things – how do you find that balance?

Lindsay Scola: Well, there're a couple of things. If you don't have early classes and you are able to stay out later, maybe you shift your sleep schedule a little bit later. I wouldn't recommend doing this regularly, but you find yourself where you're going through a period where your sleep's a little abnormal, like you're sleeping shorter – take a 90-minute nap during the day. We don't want to nap less than that. So, it's either nap less than 20 minutes or do the full 90, so that you make sure that you're giving yourself enough sleep. That's one way to look at it. But really try to see the benefits of sleep up there with the benefits of networking and everything else, because that is going to help you retain this longer. Do I need to remember the theory of backwards nations from my freshman class of Political Science? Probably not. Are you going to need to remember what you learned in law school as a lawyer? The probability's a lot higher. So, think about this as a tool towards your future career as well. Mocktails are having a moment. I am a big fan. I really love ritual. I love the clink of the glass, I love the pretty colors, I love the add-ons. They've got that now and there's a lot less sort of social shame around that. You can also order it up at the bar, no one needs to know that it's a mocktail. But the thing about alcohol and our sleep is that it is going to interrupt the cycle of your sleep, the structure of it. So, you might fall asleep just fine – there're people that are like, "Oh, I have my glass of wine and I fall asleep even better." Yeah, it's a sedative. It's going to help you fall asleep faster, but it's going to interrupt the whole cycle of it. So, imagine your sleep is this really well choreographed ballet, and the dancers are coming on one after the other, and they go to different places. And then you've got this drunk guy that comes out from the curtain and falls into the orchestra. The performance can't stop, but it's definitely ruined. So, you're going to feel crappy tomorrow. That doesn't mean stop drinking. I'm not here to take your booze away, especially during 2025. I'm not shaming anybody's coping mechanisms, but if you recognize that, "I'm going out on Friday and we're going to have that great bottle of wine, and I'm going to have more than a glass or two" – tomorrow's not going to be great. And you decide that tradeoff. Alcohol does have a long half life, so I like the "one drink at happy hour" rule. Just drink your one drink a little earlier in the evening, and that's going to help your sleep later at night.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I tell you, it is interesting, this kind of negotiation we have to have with ourselves and our future selves, right? Because you're making choices on Friday night based on who you want to be on Saturday, which is a really hard thing for us as humans to do, because we like immediate positive reinforcement.

Lindsay Scola: I have ADHD and I'm not thinking about tomorrow. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Right, right. So yeah, you don't have a relationship with your future self. You're just like, "I'll see you in the future. I'll catch up to you tomorrow."

Lindsay Scola: Yeah. That's tomorrow's problem. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Tomorrow's problem. You know, I think it is a real challenge as humans to keep that perspective of saying, "What are these choices I'm making in this present moment? How am I going to handle the ramifications of the next day?" I think for non-ADHD brains it's hard, for ADHD brains it's even harder. It's really kind of interesting to think about it that way.

Lindsay Scola: And especially when you're at a time in your life you want to be there and do all the things and be in all the places. I'm 42, I don't feel that way anymore, but when you're in this time in your life, I get it. When I was 22 and working for a congressman on Capitol Hill, and I would go to work, I would leave my office around 5:00, because they had all these receptions. So I would go eat whatever was at that reception, which they were always themed. So, you'd find the little Wisconsin cheese one – you eat a bunch of cheese, that was dinner. And then come back, do another couple of hours in the office and then go out and socialize with people till 2:00 AM, and then go back to the office the next day. And that takes a hit on you, but I know what it's like to feel like you need to be in all of those places. I just wish that I had understood what my sleep was and how to work with it at the time, so that you can make better informed choices. Because it's not about doing everything perfectly; it's about having enough information so that you can make those decisions.

Lee Burgess: I mean, we talk about this with budgeting. That's one of the things we've talked about on the podcast. We've had the founder of You Need A Budget on a few times, and he's really great about saying, "If you want a $10 coffee drink once a day, go for it. If that is important to you and that brings joy in your life, go for it. It's not a wasted $10 if you want that in your life and that brings you joy. Then make financial decisions to allow yourself to have the $10 coffee." The only problem is not deciding to have the $10 coffee and be like, "Where does $10 go every day?" He just chooses to do it. And then it's intentional and that's great. And you can make other tradeoffs of things that you don't care about as much

as your $10 coffee. I don't know if coffee could be $10 everywhere, but it definitely in the Bay Area could be $10.

Lindsay Scola: I live in LA.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so same thing. Our coffee's better than a lot of yours too, and it's still very expensive down there. But there's an intentionality around it of just like, be honest with yourself. And I wish the younger version of me had been just a bit more intentional about those choices and just said, "Hey, this is a tradeoff but I'm good to make it, because I want to do this thing" Or, last night I was out late because I wanted to go to a concert in the city. I knew that I was going to be out late. Then they had taken the Golden Gate Bridge down to one lane, which was an exciting add-on at 11:00 o'clock at night. But I was sitting in the car and I wasn't mad because I was like, "Well, I'm going to get home late, but I made this tradeoff." And I think there is kind of a gift you can give to yourself from that perspective of just saying, "I'm going to be realistic about the consequences of some of these choices. But hey, it's still my life and I get to make those choices."

Lindsay Scola: Yes, and so many issues around sleep have to do with having stress around sleep. And so, if we can take some of the stress away from it, there are things that will get easier. Something that I deal with people all the time is waking up in the middle of the night, and they're like, "How do I stop waking up in the middle of the night?" And the thing is, we are biologically programmed to wake up in the middle of the night. When you think back to us living in caves, we had to know the lions were coming in, so we have this thing that's built in for us. The lions now are deadlines and tests and family drama and stress and everything else. And so, the wakeups are going to happen, that's not the problem. The problem is the spiral. And so, if we can take the stress away that the wakeup's going to happen, then we can start having a toolbox of what we do to go back to sleep. There are super easy things that you can do. I'm a big fan of cognitive shuffling. So, I have a very busy brain. When I wake up with monkey mind, I need something that is going to be active enough to get me out of the monkey mind, but not so entertaining or big thinking that it's going to keep me awake. So you pick a letter and then start with a word. So A is for apple, B is for bear, C is for cat. If that doesn't work, I usually will just get out of bed to do something else. I go clean the kitchen. I really, really, really, really, really hate cleaning, so my brain is like, "Please, can we do anything else? I promise, I'm sleepy. I'll go back to bed." But you go do your other thing; as soon as you're sleepy, you come back to bed and that's okay. And I'm sure for a lot of people in law school, you're waking up either thinking about things that you haven't done, an idea that you just put together for something that you need to write down. Do a brain dump. Don't think about it as a memoir, you're not editing. This is really mental windshield wipers, where you are just taking a moment to get it all out

of your head, giving your brain that moment to dump so it can go back to sleep. Because when we wake up in the middle of the night, our brains are like snow globes. You can't force the snow to fall down; you just need to give it a safe place to land.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so that could be keeping a notebook by your bed. I'm sure even some people do voice recordings, although it's not great to open your phone. But there are lots of things you could do to give the busy brain somewhere else to live.

Lindsay Scola: Yeah, no, if you can keep yourself from doom scrolling... I actually use ChatGPT when I have this, because it will keep the message for me. I use the voice notes on the ChatGPT app. And then in the morning I'm like, "What was that million dollar idea that I had?" It's never a million dollar idea in the middle of the night, but it always feels like it, and my brain is happy that I recorded. But then I go through it in the morning and I have it. And sometimes it's helpful stuff like, "Oh God, I didn't send that one email." And instead of laying there being like, "I didn't send that email. This client is going to fire me, I'm never going to get a job again, and how am I going to feed my poodle?", I've written it down so I can handle it in the morning.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's just such interesting stuff about how we have to kind of manage these brains that we are pushing to do so much tracking all the time, and then shutting them down. It's ironic that my phone is dinging in here while we're doing this, because the next thing I wanted to talk about was distraction. Alison and I have been on a social media break for a while now, partly because we were feeling heavily distracted, and we have found that it has changed our sleep, making it easier to go to bed, because we both had terrible habits around doom scrolling late in the day. And also, I find it powerful when it is not the first thing you do in the morning, that it was kind of becoming these bookends. So, with all of our devices, blue light and things like that, what do we need to do to set boundaries around these devices so they can still help us in these moments where they might be able to help us, but we're not layering on these activities throughout the day that are just making it so much harder to wind down at night?

Lindsay Scola: Yeah, so the thing about the phones at night is that it is not necessarily the phone. So, the studies that they've done, blue light affects your sleep a little bit more than other spectrums of light. But it's actually way worse to be sitting under a bright lamp right before you go to bed than the blue light on your phone. And the phone has night mode. So the issue isn't necessarily the phone, the issue is the content. So, if you are watching True Crime or answering stressful emails, or doom scrolling Instagram, that is going to amp you up. And

what we want to be doing before we go to sleep is winding down. So, I have put a pretty strong boundary with myself that I don't look at news after 8:00 o'clock, and that helps my brain settle on that piece. I do like playing a game on my phone before I go to bed, it's like you pick out colored dots that match each other. I don't have to use a lot of brain power, and it's become the thing that my brain knows that we're going to do this for a few minutes, I'm going to put my sound on – I always go to sleep with sound – and that's the thing that my brain knows to look for, that's our winding down cue. So it's not the phone that's the problem, it's the content. So you really just want to start using these things with intention. And if you are somebody who the first thing you do is pick up the phone when you wake up – if you wake up in the middle of the night, you pick up the phone – charge it in another room and use an old school alarm clock. Because the thing we always want to be thinking about, either with falling asleep or when we're waking up in the middle of the night, is, we don't want to amp ourselves up. So if you are looking at the phone and being like, "Oh my God, it's 3:07, I need to wake up by 6:45. I've got this many hours and this many minutes left", and you start doing that sleep math – that's amping your brain up. And so, we want to think about the ways that we are adding to that stressful process. And if the phone is just too enticing for you to get stuck in those things that stress you out, find something else. Read a book that you don't find overly stimulating, work on a puzzle before you go to bed, something else. And then as soon as you feel sleepy, actually get in bed. We don't all have to do something that we do in bed to wind down. You can be out of your bed until you feel sleepy. You get in your bed and you go to sleep.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so there're a lot of grownup things that we have to think about in handling our sleep, because I'm seeing themes here. It's like we have to be intentional, we have to set our schedules, we have to think about how to be responsible with our technologies. So, if you're in law school right now and you are stressed out and you're not sleeping well, and maybe you don't have a full-blown sleep disorder, you just have troubled sleep – you're not sleeping enough, you're tired – what are your top five things that folks need to start with? Where do you start?

Lindsay Scola: I would say pick a consistent wake up time. I think that that is something that's really good for everybody, because that starts your circadian rhythm. Like, you wake up in the morning, get some natural light in your eyes, and that starts the process for the day where your body has this clock and it produces different chemicals throughout the day that tell you when to go to sleep at night. If you're doing that consistently, you're going to know and feel when your sort of natural sleepy place is at night. That's one easy thing to anchor on. And then at night, when you're being cognizant about your sleep, give yourself one wind down thing. Nothing makes me cringe harder than when I see somebody's 10-

step nighttime routine. That causes so much anxiety in my body, because, one, I am not a routine person. I brush my teeth because intellectually I know they're going to fall out of my face if I don't do it, and that's going to be a career issue for me. But my brain never says, "It's time to brush our teeth. Oh, you can't do something else, you haven't brushed your teeth yet." I have Post-it notes on everything that remind me to do stuff. I've got a spreadsheet of the skincare that I want to do in my mirror. So, I am not a routine person, so the idea of having all of these things that you have to do or you're not going to sleep well is stressful for me. So give yourself one thing that you do at night that sets the tone that we're changing things for the evening – even if that's just changing the lamp, you put on a candle while you're studying – just something that sets the tone. And if you do those things, you're going to start to notice more, and you're going to start to feel when you feel sleepy, and you're going to start to notice your schedule a little bit more, but you're just being intentional with those things. And then you can layer on more things later, but those are a nice place to start. And then I just want to make it very clear that sleep disorders are a real thing. And in moments of stress, like you're in right now, they're going to feel worse. And so if you are feeling excessively tired no matter what you do, know that sleep specialists are a thing, and that you can get help for this. You are not bad at being tired, you are not lacking ambition, but this is a time where it can show up for you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's a pressure cooker. Lots of things show up in law school.

Lindsay Scola: Absolutely. Absolutely. And if you notice that you're taking notes that are really good, and then there're moments of gibberish, and then the notes come back – those are warning signs that something else is going on.

Lee Burgess: And let's say you're not into data collection, like wearing a wearable or something like that. One of my medical doctors was telling me this advice about something. He's like, "Notice something once and just make a note on your phone. Notice it again, and then you've already got that note. Notice it three times, you should text me." He's like, "Don't obsess over things. Just notice it once and then deposit it somewhere." Maybe that's some way to approach sleep too. It's like, you're really overly tired for a day – make a note. And then it's like, you're overly tired for a week – well, that's a different note, right? Or you're sleeping in the bathroom stall – maybe that's its own note, right? But try and not make yourself constantly track these patterns. I like this idea of just saying, "I'm just going to make a note of that, and if it just goes away, it goes away." But if it doesn't, you can say, "Wow, now I have this history of patterns", and then experts can always help you digest those patterns. It seems so simple to do that, but after he gave me that advice, I'm like, "I don't think a lot of us do that.

Lindsay Scola: No, it feels so novel. And especially where we are with healthcare right now, for anybody who has had to become their own advocate around healthcare, we often feel like we have to diagnose ourselves. Like, we do all the research and we walk in and we're like, "I have X condition." And then the doctor looks at you and says, "You missed that day at med school. You don't have X condition." And it doesn't become like an improv situation where it's like, "Yes, and we're going to figure out what condition you do have." And so what I really like about taking notes – I'm a huge believer in this, I have a great tracker for you in my course. But what I like about taking notes is that you can walk into a doctor's visit and you can tell a story about what's going on, and have them help you connect the dots. That is the best thing that you can do for yourself. And also, how many times have you gone into a doctor's visit and they say, "How are you doing?" and you're like, "Fine", because you go totally blank at the time.

Lee Burgess: Totally blank.

Lindsay Scola: But if you've been keeping these notes... And you don't have to do it every day, but when you notice something, you write it down and you have this story that you can tell. You can even hand your notes over to the doctor and have them look at it. But that's such beautiful advice for people, because that is going to help figure out patterns differently. And then just one more push for sleep specialists. Because of the way we teach sleep in this country, and other countries, the average general practitioner has about two hours of sleep education. So, they might not realize some of the things that are happening for you are around your sleep. Women and sleep apnea – it's not necessarily loud snoring and gasping. It's waking up multiple times in the middle of the night to pee, it's waking up with a headache or a sore throat. And if you go to your GP, they might not think sleep apnea right away. So if you are feeling excessively tired during the day, make sure to see a sleep specialist.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. One other tidbit I read in the book I was reading – it had a chapter on sleep and then I was like, "Oh, this is so great, because I'm talking to Lindsay tomorrow. I'm going to be so prepped with all these new facts that I read that she already knows." But they're very novel to me, so I wrote them down – was like, why don't we hit the "Snooze" button? Oh my gosh, I used to be a big snoozer. I don't actually sleep with an alarm anymore, because I get up early because my kids have trained me to. And so now I wake up before them, because they stole my ability to sleep in from me. But there was a time when I used to love the "Snooze" button, but it sounds like that's a really terrible idea.

Lindsay Scola: Well, it doesn't actually help you, because you're not getting real sleep at that point. And I used to be a big believer in the "Snooze" button as well. And when you keep hitting it for five more minutes, you're just getting this sort of

fractured light sleep. So, your body's thinking it's going into another sleep cycle and it's preparing for that, and then when it comes out of that, it's not getting it and you're completely starting over again. So it's actually going to make you feel groggier than if you just got up when the alarm went off. So if you are someone who finds yourself constantly hitting "Snooze", figure out what time you're actually getting out of bed and just set the alarm for that time.

Lee Burgess: Because that's the time you have to get up if you're making it to work.

Lindsay Scola: Yeah. No, and here's the thing. We are all sort of biologically programmed to wake up at different times – they're called sleep chronotypes. So some people naturally wake up before the sun, some people naturally wake up with the sun, some people naturally wake up after the sun, and some people are a little bit more inconsistent.

Lee Burgess: And some people's children drive them into the ground and make them wake up early.

Lindsay Scola: Yes. That has nothing to do with your biological clock.

Lee Burgess: Lights of my life. Lights of my life. I mean, they're the best. I love them so much.

Lindsay Scola: But if you are somebody who naturally wakes up with the sun – 7:00 o'clock, 7:30 is your sweet spot, but you keep reading all of this stuff that's like, "If you just wake up at 5:00 o'clock, you're going to be the most productive human in the world." Those early hours are never going to feel productive for you. Now, we all have things that we can't control. You have to wake up earlier for work than you've planned for, you have children. You can bake that in, but you need to understand that if you have a choice on it and you think that you're going to be super productive at 5:00 o'clock in the morning, and that is not a natural wake up time for you – those are wasted hours, because we all are productive at different times based on that programming. So if you're someone who naturally wakes up at 5:00 o'clock, you get your best stuff done at that time. But if someone wants you to do a big creative planning strategy session at 4:00 o'clock, that's going to make you want to rip your own eyelashes out. I'm someone who naturally wakes up after the sun, so 8:00 AM meetings are sort of an act of violence for me. But you give me a big creative strategy session at 4:00 o'clock and I'm going to rock that. That's my superpower time. So, don't just think about it for your wake up time, but notice your own natural lulls during the day and plan accordingly for when you feel the best.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and that goes to the productivity, right? I think that a lot of folks don't really sit down and think about those pockets where we are able to be very

productive, or pockets where we're more creative, and being able to, as much as you can, plan your day – which as a student, you have a decent bit of autonomy around where you can do those different types of work, and do those at those times. You know, 4:30 to 6:30 is not my most creative window of my day, so I'm trying to get better to push my administrative work. I'm fine doing administrative work, it's just not my most creative part of the day. So, why would I do heavy lifting? I'm not going to come up with new things. I also don't record podcasts at 4:30, because I'm not as charming as I am right now, at 12:52, right? This is my better part of the day, especially after the coffee smoothie that I just had. But I think there's an honesty about learning about yourself. Now, when you have a big grownup job and you're working at a BigLaw firm, it's not like you can say at 4:30, "This really isn't my best time, so I'm just going to go peace out." They're not going to love that because you have to bill hours, but you still typically do have some autonomy. If you're writing, maybe you don't do your writing in the late afternoon, if you can avoid it. You do big writing chunks earlier in the day, and maybe you...

Lindsay Scola: You still have to do administrative work.

Lee Burgess: You still have to do administrative work. And so, I do think that as you have control, you can still bend it to who you are. But I think there is some self-exploration here, is one of the themes that I've seen throughout this conversation we're having. If you feel like you want to be more productive, if you want to be the best version of yourself, there's a little self-exploration, there's maybe some tracking, some honesty, some evaluation, asking for some help. And all you're really trying to do is just live your best wild and precious life like the rest of us, which you can do if you're not being held back by some of these habits that you may not even realize are influencing so much of your life. And maybe they're habits or you have underlying conditions that need to be diagnosed.

Lindsay Scola: Absolutely. And I think the primary thing is understanding how sleep works, what it's doing for you, and getting to make that conscious choice. Because for years I thought I was doing the right thing by showing up to work earlier, staying later, and really going against my natural productivity on that. And if I had known some of these things earlier, it wouldn't have kept me from getting narcolepsy, but I might've gotten help sooner if I had understood what healthy sleep looked like so I could get the right kind of answers.

Lee Burgess: Well, we could talk all day, but you have to nap. We already talked about you were going to go take a nap, which is great. I'll virtually nap with you.

Lindsay Scola: I do enjoy my nap.

Lee Burgess: Which I'm really jealous, so it's fine. But you have a new course, a sleep course, which I think is really interesting for students to consider, if this all sounds very interesting to them. So, talk to me about your sleep course and how you're helping people figure out how to be their best selves. So, can you share a little more about that and who's a great kind of customer who might be interested in doing this course, and what are they going to get out of it?

Lindsay Scola: So, this course is for really anybody. If you're dealing with stress and having a hard time sleeping at night, if you're feeling like you're sleepier than you should be, or if you want to figure out how sleep can actually become your superpower as you're entering a career in law – this is going to help you and there's something there for everyone. So, what I do is I take people through understanding what your sleep is, so that you can make decisions based on that. Really looking at your own schedule so that you can build in what's going to be the most helpful for you. And I always say this is a guide, not a cage, so that you can make decisions consciously. And then I help you make your own sleep blueprint. So, what are the choices that you're going to do to get ready for bed? Making a toolkit so you know what to do when you wake up in the middle of the night. Dealing with choices around alcohol, coffee, naps, understanding social jet lag. What happens when we change our schedule a lot? I walk you through what the symptoms of sleep disorders are, so that you're aware for yourself, for a loved one. If you do need to see a sleep specialist, I help you prepare for that type of appointment and what happens if you get diagnosed. And then I wrap it up with something called "sleep leadership", is that you are going into a career where you're going to be modeling this behavior for the people around you, how you do it in a lower level, in a middle level, and at a leadership level, and how you model it at home, how you work with it with a spouse or a partner, or your children. And I think that it's a really great overview so that you can make conscious choices about your own sleep, without feeling like you've got all this extra homework. I have a special discount for this podcast, which we'll link for you, but if you use the phrase LAWSCHOOL, you'll get 20% off. And I really hope to see you on the other side of the course.

Lee Burgess: Awesome. Well, we will link to all of that in our show notes. Lindsay, thanks for spending time today with me. I always find it very interesting to talk about this stuff, and I'm just so appreciative that we can have these conversations, which I feel like we were not having 20 years ago, when we were in the early, early parts of our professional lives. So, I encourage everyone to take advantage of these conversations, and realize that you're doing hard things, and you have to give your body the fuel that it needs to be able to do its awesome hard things.

Lindsay Scola: One hundred percent. And so grateful that you all are leading the charge to make sure that people have access to all of these resources. This is so helpful and so wonderful, and I couldn't be happier to be back.

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:

Lindsay Scola
LinkedIn: Lindsay Scola
Sleep Is the Power Move course
Podcast Episode 134: Strategies for Maximum Personal Productivity
Podcast Episode 498: Tips for Better Rest with Sleep Expert Lindsay Scola (Part 1)
Podcast Episode 499: Tips for Better Rest with Sleep Expert Lindsay Scola (Part 2)