



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast. Today we are talking with Brittany Raposa, the director of Bar Support at Roger Williams University School of Law, where she teaches bar preparation courses and legal ethics review courses. Brittany is also a tutor for the Law School Toolbox and the Bar Exam Toolbox.

Your Bar Exam Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, and Lee Burgess--that's me. We're here to demystify the bar exam experience so you can study effectively, stay sane, and hopefully pass and move on with your life. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on your favorite listening app, and check out our sister podcast, the [Law School Toolbox Podcast](#).

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on BarExamToolbox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And, with that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we are getting ready for exam day with Brittany Raposa, a bar exam expert and [tutor](#) on our Bar Exam Toolbox team. So, Brittany, thanks for joining me.

Brittany Raposa: Thanks for having me.

Lee Burgess: So I wanted to run down kind of a list of things studiers should be thinking about in the days or weeks leading up to the bar exam as well some kind of day-of tips. So I think it's important to [start thinking about the day of even a couple of weeks before the exam](#). Do you agree?

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I would say that's important to do. It's better to get it kind of just thought about earlier rather than last minute just to reduce stress.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So the first thing I think people tend to ignore but I think is really important is [getting your computer ready](#) because if you're going to take the exam on the computer, which I think almost everyone does at this point, you really want to make sure that all your ducks are in a row because computer problems that are avoidable are something you absolutely don't want to invite into your life.

Brittany Raposa: Right. Yeah. I think so. I think that a lot of students don't realize that a computer malfunction can really throw you off, so making sure it's ready is probably one of the most important things to do.

Lee Burgess: So you've got to make sure your computer is in good working conditions and meets the technology requirements that your state bar might set up. Hopefully you have researched this already, even before, a few weeks before the exam,



because if you borrow a computer or get a new computer, you just want to make sure that whatever you have, because it could be three years old, it could be something that you've had since before you started last school, but it's what's necessary to sit for the test.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think too that you want to make sure that you have tested the ExamSoft or Exemplify too.

Lee Burgess: They just keep changing it. I can't even catch up with what the bar exams are called.

Brittany Raposa: I think they just did an update to it, actually, again, for the July bar.

Lee Burgess: Oh, great.

Brittany Raposa: So I think that all students should make sure that you test it early. Make sure you do the practice test ahead of time so that you know everything's working and so you kind of just know how the new system operates with spellcheck and timers and things like that.

Lee Burgess: Exactly, and I think a lot of students don't appreciate that you can take practice essays, I think most of the time as many as you want, on the screen, using the software. You can't save it, so you couldn't like save it and submit it to your bar review provider or something like that, but you can still set your clock and do the practice on the screen and get comfortable with it basically looks like a word processing program, but you could still get more comfortable with it, which I think is important.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, I think so too. And also students just want to make sure that they understand how it works so they're not panicking on the day of the exams, which happens a lot.

Lee Burgess: It does.

Brittany Raposa: It happens to students.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it didn't take much to find something to panic about.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, absolutely not. Definitely not. And I think that one of the biggest things, even with when students are deciding whether to type or handwrite is the anticipation, the anxiety, or something bad happening on the day of the test.

Lee Burgess: Right.



- Brittany Raposa: And so malfunction. And so I think that one of the things that students can do is maybe practice handwriting some essays before the bar exam just so they can get the feel of it in case they do have a technology issue.
- Lee Burgess: Right, which I think is really important, and I think a lot of people don't realize that if you have a technology issue, they basically hand you a blue book. I mean, you're not going to want to take a lot of time futzing around with your computer to get it back up and running. And hopefully they can recover whatever you've written. But your job is to still get as much material down on the page as you can in the time allowed. They're not going to like give you extra time because you had a computer problem.
- Brittany Raposa: Right. And I think that it's important for our students to know that you don't get extra time even though you might miss a few minutes in the hustle and bustle of things. It's kind of lost time.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and it's scary. I didn't have it happen to me in the bar, but I had it happen to me in the law school exam. My-
- Brittany Raposa: Me too.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, when they just hand you the blue book, you're like, "Uh ..." And they're like, "Well, you have a couple hours left, so get going." You know?
- Brittany Raposa: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: You're just kind of like, "All righty."
- Brittany Raposa: Yeah, and I think it's important, though, to know that I think that students panic about it being lost, but ExamSoft, everything is saved to a cloud. So anything that you did write can be and will be retrieved, even if you have to handwrite later.
- Lee Burgess: And I know plenty of people who have actually had technology problems on the test who still have passed.
- Brittany Raposa: Same.
- Lee Burgess: So, you know. And I think other kooky things can even happen outside of your own computer having issues. A couple of years ago, it might be more than five years ago now, in California one of the testing centers, the power strips on some of the rows just went out. So you had to work off your battery. And most of us, by the time you have a three- or four-year-old laptop, your battery life is not 3+ hours basically.



Brittany Raposa: Yeah. Definitely not.

Lee Burgess: And so they just everybody knew their computers were going to die, so they just had to write. They typed as long as they could, and then I think it was later the last question or the last part of the performance test they were like, "Okay, well, I guess I'll just handwrite this one because I know my computer is going to crash no matter what." But plenty of people passed even with that happening, so you just have to be able to in a high-stress situation remain slightly flexible, which is really hard.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, it is, but I think that if students follow this advice in a couple weeks before the exam kind of just like practice it and anticipate it possibly happening, then the panic in the exam will be very minimized.

Lee Burgess: That's true. If you decide what you're going to do, then at least you can say, "This is how I'm going to handle it."

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, [panic plan](#).

Lee Burgess: Yeah, panic plan. I like that. So another few things to think about, often times setting your monitor so it doesn't go to sleep after a period of inactivity helps. Sometimes different computers go to different sleep modes, and that can cause problems with exam software. So although it might not be the best thing for energy efficiency, you might want to just turn that off as soon as you can so you do not have to worry that your computer will go to sleep, let's say, while you're outlining or something like that.

And I also think it's important to decide where you're going to upload your answers because you kind of have to realize, and, again, every year they kind of like change this process, but if there's something affirmatively you need to do to like send your answers off into the examiners, you don't want to be in a situation where you like get home, and you leave your computer somewhere, and then you don't upload them, or you decide to go out and have a drink with your friends after the first day of the bar. And you're now in a bar with your computer that has like answers on it. You just want to be thoughtful about that and make sure that you kind of have a plan if you're going straight home. Just do it. Get it over with. Do anything you need to do to kind of close out the writing day so you don't risk something happening.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think that's a really good idea. I think another thing too is just to remember that with that comes the issue of, and I think you mentioned it a little bit before, but our batteries aren't as best as they could be. So just make sure that you know how to secure it in there on exam day so that it doesn't pop off and then all of a sudden your computer dies and you need to have it turned back on and waste that time too. So I think that that's really important as well.



Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, it's kind of like think about the bar as like a really long road trip. Before you go drive across country, you would probably get your car checked out, you know, maybe an oil change, maybe check the air in your tires. Just give it that service that it hasn't had in a long time before you drive it across country. And I think with your computer you kind of want to do the same thing. You want to make sure you said like your battery pack is okay, if something is removable, your plug is consistent and works, your computer is not getting crazy updates. You've turned off extra stuff. You just want to kind of give it a little bit of a tune-up before the exam.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, and I think that some students do this too. I think that if they have a computer from like 2002, some people do, they just borrow a really good friend or family member's laptop and download ExamSoft on that. So that's an option as well. And so students do that sometimes when they just don't have the best computer and someone is nice enough to lend them something for exam day.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, because it is just one day. So at least it's not like you're asking to have it for a long time, but I had to do that with, I did have my mom's laptop at one point in law school after mine had melted down in one exam. I was like, "I just need a different one. Mine has bad juju." I was just like, "I can't use it again."

Brittany Raposa: I've been there too.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I'm like not a super superstitious person, but it's just too hard to not be a little superstitious once a computer turns on you. It was very personal. It was like-

Brittany Raposa: I agree.

Lee Burgess: Okay, well, let's talk about where you're going to stay, because a lot of people travel to the bar exam all over the country. And a lot of people will stay at a hotel. And I think folks sometimes don't think through the logistics of staying in a hotel. They maybe get that reservation, and then they feel like they're good to go. So we wanted to review kind of a few things that we recommend that you think about. So if you're staying at a big hotel like near a conference center, sometimes the bar will have a specific hotel that they recommend at the conference center.

You might want to get a low-floor room. The views might not be as nice, but a lot of times the bar is not somewhere with great views, I'll be honest. But it's not going to take you as much time to get down to the exam center. If you're on a high floor when everybody in that hotel is trying to get to the exam room, it can be kind of frustrating even at lunch time to go up and down. So that's something you want to think about.



We'll talk a bit more about food, but a lot of times folks like to [get a mini fridge](#) in their room, which some hotels will rent you for a small fee so they can pack in food. This is something that I did, which made a really big difference for me. I also had friends who just pour out in big coolers and used coolers to kind of pack in some groceries. But I really wanted to be able to eat my own food for lunch and for breakfast and to not have to rely on room service, which can be sketchy or not delicious.

Brittany Raposa: Also you don't want to get sick either, so if you're eating your own food, it just kind of minimizes that risk.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So you might say like, "I can't believe I'm paying an extra \$30, \$40 for my mini fridge," but it will probably be a wash if you consider, one, how expensive room service can be, but, two, just that confidence that you know that you're going to have things that you need and that your body is comfortable with, and you know kind of how much you need to eat and things like that.

So it's worth checking out, whether or not you have a mini fridge, or I've just seen people, like I said, bring in coolers with ice that they get replenished, and they're able to keep some food in there as well.

Brittany Raposa: Right.

Lee Burgess: Another thing that I'm a big fan of is late checkout on Wednesday so you can eat lunch in your room on Wednesday, because as much as I am a bit of a social person, I did not want to talk to anybody during the bar.

Brittany Raposa: Oh yeah, I don't think students realize that checkout time at hotels is really like in the morning. So you lose the room. And if you do a late checkout, you can leave your stuff in there and don't have to worry about it ...

Lee Burgess: Or you don't have to pack in the morning.

Brittany Raposa: ... mainly until after the exam. Right.

Lee Burgess: Right. So you get the option to eat lunch in your room. You don't have to pack in the morning. I remember coming downstairs on the last day of the bar and seeing the lineup of suitcases that they have in this-

Brittany Raposa: Me too.

Lee Burgess: ... whole room, because everybody was trying to pack on the way to the test. And that might not be how you want to spend your MBE morning. You might



want to be focused and doing other things. So it's worth considering. Sometimes they will charge you a small fee. Sometimes hotels are just nice. Often times it's not like they're super booked the day after the bar exam because they've had two days of bar people there.

But I also think that being able to hide somewhere at lunch from other nervous people is very helpful, not listening to people talk about the test, especially in the MBE day. I don't know if you had this experience, Brittany, but they mix up the MBE questions, so everybody's MBE experience is a little bit different. And listening to people talk about their MBE experience just it can really send you into a tailspin because you might say, "I don't remember questions on that," or, "I didn't think the morning session was that hard." I don't know. I think it can really mess with you mentally.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think so. I think that it's kind of like historical, the idea that they have one section of the MBE that's harder, but not everyone gets the same section at the same time. And so listening to people talk about how hard or easy it was is just not going to be good for anyone's mental health going in for the second part-

Lee Burgess: No.

Brittany Raposa: ... of the exam.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. To give you a terrible idea, so that's why I really like just going back to your room by yourself, turn on music, or podcast, or turn on the TV. I watched Happy Feet, which was on HBO. I think like every day I sat for the bar, Happy Feet was on at lunch. So ...

Brittany Raposa: I watched Paddington.

Lee Burgess: Paddington? I like it. It's just so weird what you remember, but it was mindless. And you're just killing time until you can go back and finish the test. But it's not like lunch hour is super happy. If you don't have a hotel room, I have had students who eat in their car and listen to music. I've had students who take a walk or find a place that's further away from the testing center so they can get away from people. But you really do want to be conscious that the noise of other people chatting about their experience can really be a detriment to you.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, definitely. I think that especially too on essay day students really like to talk about what they wrote in the essays. And so I would try to get away definitely that day at least.



Lee Burgess: Oh, for sure. What about if you're crashing at a friend's or family member's home? Do you think there are some things you have to watch out for that? It's great because it's probably free, but it can come with its own complications.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think that if you're staying with a friend or family member, you really need to make sure that it's quiet and people that you're staying with are supportive and aren't going to ... I don't want to use the word bother you, but that's kind of what I mean, so, and then that they know that you're studying for or that you're taking the bar, and that you need to focus, and that you need to be in bed at x time.

And if you're not staying in a hotel, so typically when students stay in a hotel, it's quite close to the exam room; your family member or friend's home might not be, so you really want to make sure that you've practiced going to the place, to the exam location at least once so that you don't get lost. If you're going to take an Uber, make sure that you know how long it takes to get from the place where you're staying to the exam site and all of those types of things. So you just want to make sure you can get there at a good time, no traffic, no noise, and just be somewhere that's respectful and also in a good distance to the exam location.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that that's true. And it can be maybe you're staying with your aunt, who's fairly quiet. Maybe she has a guestroom. Maybe that's a great setup. Let's say you're staying with a bunch of your college buddies who want to hang out with you and drink beer with you at night. That may not be the best time to that. Do that on Wednesday after you're done. Go to their house on Wednesday. But ...

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. Agreed.

Lee Burgess: The other thing I like people to think about is what they're going to bring with you or what you're going to take with you wherever you're going to stay. I really recommend you take minimal study materials. You do not need to bring like every single bar review book you have because at this point, by the time you're the day of the exam, you either kind of know it or you don't. So if you have condensed outlines, or just one book of outlines, or some stuff that you want to review day of or the night before, which we'll talk about, but that could be a bad idea as well, take that with you. But you don't want to just haul all this material because it's going to make you crazy. You just-

Brittany Raposa: I agree. And you're not going to ... In theory you're not going to look at it anyway, especially if you bring all of those books.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.



Brittany Raposa: So, I mean, I recommend just kind of bringing minimal outlines, and that's pretty much it.

Lee Burgess: Yep. You also want to take some entertainment for yourself because I found that the evenings ... And so when I took California--to age myself, although it's only been a couple years--it was three days. So you had like three evenings, which was pretty long. But I think even if you're just going the day before and you have two evenings, they're still kind of long because you don't want to study super late, you want to be able to go to bed and be refreshed. So you want to have a good book or maybe some movies, or some favorite TV shows, or some magazines. But you want to keep it light.

I was actually reading a book that I thought was light. And then I realized that someone was going to come down with cancer. It was one of those things where you're like, "This is not going well." So I literally like shut the book and like put it in my suitcase. I was like, "I don't think I should be reading sad cancer story right now." Like, it was just-

Brittany Raposa: That's a good idea. I spent most of the time watching Friends on the television in the hotel.

Lee Burgess: That was nice.

Brittany Raposa: So nothing sad. And I think that happy comedies I would recommend if you're going to watch something.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. But I was, I don't think I opened the book the rest of the bar. I was just like, "I can't go there right now." The last thing-

Brittany Raposa: I don't blame you.

Lee Burgess: The last thing I needed to do would be like crying in my hotel room by myself because the book got super sad.

Brittany Raposa: That's the best decision.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. You also want to plan ahead about everything you need for the exam day, like your ticket, your power cord, your ID, whatever is allowed in the exam room in your jurisdiction. But be careful. Don't take every single thing that's allowed because just because they say you can bring in a pillow for your back, don't bring a pillow unless you need a pillow. It's just more stuff you have to keep track of and more stuff that you have to manage.



**Brittany Raposa:** Yeah. Definitely make sure that you check the jurisdiction's requirements of what you can bring in the exam room. You don't want to accidentally bring something that you weren't supposed to bring in, like something, like a watch, say, and that jurisdiction didn't allow you to, and then they are giving you trouble about even sitting for the exam.

So make sure you're really familiar with the requirements of what you can bring, what you can't bring. And if you get accommodations and you can bring something special in like medication or anything like that, just make sure that you have that ready as well.

**Lee Burgess:** Right. And that's a really good point about accommodations. I know in some jurisdictions you will take the exam in a hotel room, often with one other person. And you need to check in for the accommodations the day before the exam. Or there could be some additional steps that you need to take to make sure that you're all set up.

And so don't wait until the last minute to review the paperwork that the bar sent to you. Make sure that you understand what you can bring with you, where you're going to sit for the test, when you need to check in, all of that stuff because yours is going to be slightly different than your friends'. Even if you know multiple people who have accommodations, everyone's accommodations can be very tailored to their own individual situation. So use those reading comprehension skills. Make sure that you go through everything very carefully so you're not surprised by anything.

**Brittany Raposa:** Yeah, I agree, and I would do that all about one to two weeks before the exam just to make sure that you have your ducks in a row, for sure.

**Lee Burgess:** So, Brittany, you mentioned this when you were talking about staying with family or friends that you need to have a transportation plan. And I think that unless you're staying in the convention center hotel where the exam is taking place, everybody needs to have a transportation plan, especially since often times you're taking the exam in a metropolitan area, which means some people take public transit.

So you need to test the route and figure out if there's a delay, if there's a second route. I took the bar in Oakland when I was living in San Francisco, and I was so paranoid about BART, which is our train system, because there's only one way to get from San Francisco to Oakland on BART, which is in a tunnel under the Bay. And I was like, "What if the train stops in the tunnel? There's no alternative or way out." I was so paranoid.

I had plenty of friends who got to the bar exam on BART just fine, but I was so paranoid that I just had these dreams that like the train was going to get stuck in



the tunnel, and there's no alternative way to get there. That may have been taking it a little too far. But that's okay.

Brittany Raposa: That's the way all the negative thoughts happen.

Lee Burgess: I know they do.

Brittany Raposa: When you're thinking about how to get to the bar exam.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Exactly. But most places might have a bus system or a train system. Or you can have Uber as a backup or Lyft. But even I had a Uber situation, which made me late to do this podcast this morning. Stuff happens. So you want to just make sure that you are giving yourself extra time. If it's normally a 15-minute drive, you better give yourself 30 minutes. You just don't know what's going to happen.

If you're driving, I think parking is a big deal. You want to make sure you understand what parking structures or where you're going to park. Make sure you don't get tickets or get your car towed. You want to make sure that you know that situations. And that probably means that you go to the exam site when you can and check things out to see if you can see where the main parking structure is, or if there's street parking, or whatever the situation might be so you're not surprised.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think one of the biggest takeaways is to just leave early. Even if you get to the exam site a half hour or 45 minutes before you're even supposed to be there, that's better than getting there a half hour or 45 minutes later.

Lee Burgess: Oh, yes.

Brittany Raposa: So, yeah.

Lee Burgess: And you can still protect yourself from the craziness. We're talking about if everybody else has anxiety. So you can sit in your car, listen to music. You can wear headphones. I think it's kind of nice now that everybody is wearing the bigger headphones, not just the little earbuds. But you put on big headphones, and people won't talk to you if you're sitting there listening to music. Create a big bar playlist of music that makes you feel positive.

Don't listen to sad, sappy music. Listen to whatever makes you kind of feel positive. Or I have students who've done meditations before the test to try and calm themselves down. You could listen to recorded meditations. You could do lots of different things, but a little extra time is better than showing up late.



Brittany Raposa: Yeah, I agree 100%. I think that's the biggest takeaway from it. Just give yourself more time than you think you even need.

Lee Burgess: One other thing I forgot to mention about staying at a hotel is depending on where you're testing site is, I know there's one specific site in Southern California at the Ontario Airport or near the Ontario Airport. It's in Ontario, which is a big convention center, but it's out in kind of the sprawling part of Eastern Los Angeles. And there are lots of hotel options, a few of whom have kitchens.

And so another thing to think about especially if you have any food allergies or things like that is maybe trying to stay at a type of suite place where you have a kitchen could be a big deal. I've had students who were celiac or have other major food restrictions where it is just easier for them to just make all of their own food, not just even bring it in and have in a mini fridge, because they need to make all of those meals.

And that way if you have a kitchen, you can make eggs or whatever it is that you like to eat. So that's another thing to explore. It may be worth it to drive a short distance further to stay at a place that might have a kitchen. So something else to just consider.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, I think that's important too.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. All right, well, since we're talking about food ... Oh, before we do that, I wanted to talk about your morning schedule because we just talked about leaving early, but I think people need to start thinking about their morning schedule as in like working backwards, right? If you need to be 30 minutes earlier than the test starts to get there, then you have to have travel time. You need to have plenty of time to get ready. I'm not a huge morning person, but you don't want to be rushing around trying to get out the door.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, I think so. I think that you should plan out your day, even if it's in like your Google Calendar or whatever calendar or system that you use. And you say, "Okay, I'm going to get up at 6:00 AM, and I'm going to get ready from 6:30 to 7:00. And then I'm going to allow myself travel time from 7:00 to 8:00." I think that that should all be planned out ahead of time just so you feel comfortable. Honestly, a lot of this advice is to help students with minimizing the anxiety on exam day. And so just doing that and planning the day of will really help minimize any anxiety that you might feel.

Lee Burgess: And if you are someone who doesn't typically get up at 6:00 or 6:30, I think before the exam, say, a week or so before, start setting your alarm at that time.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I agree.



- Lee Burgess: Start practicing this morning routine because if you are someone who typically gets up at 8:00, 6:00 is going to feel pretty brutal if that's when you have to get up to do the exam. But if you practice doing it for a week, it's going to make it a lot easier. So you can start your study day a little bit earlier to more align with what the exam day is going to look like to get your body acclimated to performing at that time of day.
- Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I definitely agree. And it kind of goes to like maybe even like a month before the exam, or a little bit before the exam you should be studying or quite earlier too just so you can kind of get your brain in that mode of working earlier than maybe it's used to. I know I have students who don't start studying until 3:00 PM. And they study until a little after midnight, and that's what works for them. But eventually they're going to have to change their habits because their brain needs to work at 9:00, not at 3:00.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Brittany Raposa: At the best optimal time. And so if you don't think that you can wake up early enough or you won't feel as your best self at 7:00 or 6:00 in the morning, make sure that you start waking up at that time a few weeks before, a couple of weeks before the exam so you get used to it.
- Lee Burgess: Right. And then don't study until midnight.
- Brittany Raposa: Correct.
- Lee Burgess: I think that's the thing. You can't ask yourself to get up at 6:00 if you go to bed at midnight. I mean, you can, but you're not going to feel like ... [Most of us are not going to feel super rested](#). So if you're starting to shift your schedule, you have to shift your whole schedule. If you start studying at 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, there's no reason you shouldn't be done at like 6:00, 7:00 at night, even with a nice lunch break or doing other things.
- So then stop. Watch TV. Go to the gym. Hang out with your significant other. Walk your dogs, whatever you do in your evenings. And then go to bed at a reasonable time, because if you go to bed at like 10:00, then getting up at 6:00 is not so brutal. But you have to also be used to going to bed at 10:00. I never used to go to bed early until I had a kid who likes to get up at 5:45 or 6:00 in the morning. Now I go to bed at 10:00. If I go to bed when my body clock wants to go to bed, that is too early for me. So you have to just make these adjustments. But your body will adjust if you practice.
- Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I absolutely 100% agree. I'm pretty much a morning person, but when I was studying for the bar, I was guilty of studying until possibly 11:00, midnight,



or into the late hours. So I definitely scaled that back in the few weeks before the exam so that I would feel rested when I needed to feel rested on exam day.

Lee Burgess: And different people are different too. Stress really effects my sleep, and so if I studied too late, I could not shut my brain off. My brain needed a buffer of time to kind of decompress so I could even sleep. And I was reading the Barbara Walters biography, which sounds really weird, but it was very thick, and it was not ... See, I'm all into things that are not like overly stimulating. But it's just like kind of like history. I think non-fiction can be very great reading for things like this because you can always put it down. It's not like, "Oh, I have to finish the chapter to find out what happened." No. I just found I like non-fiction. I think people stories are really interesting. So I could just read some of that. I could put it down whenever I was tired. It wasn't stressful. It wasn't emotional. And I think that picking some books or shows or things like that that you can do to wind down at night is really productive.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I think so too. A lot of students have been telling me that they feel like they're still studying in their brain when they're going to bed at night. And so that's how you don't sleep. But you want to make sure that you do give yourself some time to unwind and so that you can sleep so you're not constantly thinking about criminal law and torts when you're trying to go to sleep.

Lee Burgess: I know. Do you know, I was at acupuncture yesterday when you're supposed to be all super Zen, like having your rest in the room. And I was totally thinking about work the whole time. And then I realized, I was like, "I'm laying on the acupuncture table where I'm supposed to be in a Zen place. And instead I'm like clicking off my to-do list of the things that I'm going to do to like remedy this problem at work. Like, What am I doing?"

Brittany Raposa: I know.

Lee Burgess: Because it's hard even if you practice like calming your mind and doing all this stuff, it's still when you get a little cranked up, it's very hard to do. So you have to be kind to yourself but also set yourself up for success and don't waste time like in acupuncture worrying about work. That's probably not the ...

All right, well, we've talked a bit about food, not just because I love food, which I do, but [food is very important with the bar exam](#), and I think it is something that is very underdiscussed. I think a lot of times people want to eat junk food because it's kind of seen as comforting. But that often times leads to fatigue, sugar crashes. It's not going to sustain you, which is going to end up hurting your performance.

I've had students fail sections of the bar that I do believe failed because they ate crap from lunch. I know it sounds crazy, but if you only eat french fries for lunch,



it's probably two hours later you're going to be starving, and [you're not going to be able to think clearly](#). So you do have to plan out what you're going to eat.

We've talked about if you're staying at a hotel you can plan your breakfast and lunch so you don't rely on room service or takeout food. And I think that is also a really good idea because you don't want to try the new Indian place that you've never been before-

Brittany Raposa: Right. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: ... right before the test.

Brittany Raposa: Well, I had a student in February, just this past February, who ate takeout, really greasy, and the next day at the bar exam she was so sick, and she couldn't finish her essay portion.

Lee Burgess: Oh. That's just heartbreaking.

Brittany Raposa: So you just, food is seriously so important and not something that students can consider. Save the grease comfort food for after the exam.

Lee Burgess: It's so true. Or only if you live in the city where you're doing the exam, only eat places you usually eat. Don't do an experiment with things.

Brittany Raposa: Definitely.

Lee Burgess: So if you don't have a hotel room, the other thing you can do is just packing your lunch, which a lot of people do. You mentioned some people sit in their cars. Packing your lunch may make you feel like a little kid, but, again, it's better than being in line, not sure where you're going to eat, what you're going to eat, having to eat too fast, not having time to go to the restroom. And you need to eat what your body is used to.

So one of the things that I think a lot of times people struggle with is not being able to snack during the test. Most jurisdictions, if not all, don't let you snack during the test unless you have accommodations for food, which I realize might sound like a great idea, but you do have to have like a medical reason why you have to eat in a three-hour window. And so you need to get used to not snacking.

So another thing I often times tell my students, "When you're shifting your schedule to this morning session, decide what you might want to have for lunch. If you think, 'I'm going to make a turkey sandwich and that's going to be plenty,' well, try it. And then at 2:30 or 3:00, if you're hungry, then you didn't eat



enough for lunch and you need to start experimenting with like increasing your protein or cutting down sugar or whatever you need to do, because if you're a snacker and you might be used to eating small meals throughout the day, the bar might be a real challenge for your body, and you need to train yourself to be able to go the three, three and a half hour sessions without having that additional calorie content.

**Brittany Raposa:** Yeah. I agree. That's really important. When I took the bar exam, I packed my own lunch, and I made sure that I brought something, and I tested this out ahead of time. I think I ate this lunch for like two weeks to make sure I'd be okay. But I did it. It was like a ham sandwich and some like, I don't know, some crackers. And it was okay for me. And I think that it's good that the July bar is in the summer, so you can sit on a piece of grass somewhere by yourself and eat your packed lunch, enjoy some ... get some sun. Hopefully it's not raining. And I think that bringing your lunch is probably one of the best ways to go in my opinion.

**Lee Burgess:** Yeah. I think so too. Okay. Now I wanted to just hit on a couple other final things to avoid or to think about with the day of. So we've already talked about negative influence. So it's so easy to get sucked into anyone else's drama or to get sucked into someone else's drama. If they're freaking out about the test, they want to talk about what was on the essays, they want to talk about their answers, you have to be conscious of just politely declining having those conversations and walking away.

It's not going to serve you. It's not going to make you feel better. And the anxiety is addictive. I even had some friends who maybe took it a little far, but they were significant others, both studying for the bar. And they had a pact not to talk to each other during the whole three days because they were like, "If one of us has something happen, it would literally ruin the other one's experience." And so they just decided not to talk until the test was over because they were so worried that the emotional pain of one would cause emotional pain of the other, which I thought was wise but maybe a little extreme. But on the other hand, I kind of appreciated that they just were like, "This is survival. We both have to kind of go do this separately, and then we can come back together afterwards."

**Brittany Raposa:** Yeah. I think that's probably one of the best ideas. I remember when I sat for the bar I was sitting next to someone who was a repeat taker, and I guess we went to the same law school. And she was telling me about how she failed and how everyone fails. And it was right on the first day that we were ... And I had to just politely say, "I am not having this conversation with you." I think I put my earplugs in, and I was just like, "Okay. What a great way to start off the test." But I think don't be nervous to shut someone down, especially if it benefits you.



Lee Burgess: Yeah, because this is your experience. You have to own it. Yeah, you just ... I like your idea. You put earplugs in. Some people even put earplugs in as they exit the testing room so you don't hear people talking about the test, which is good too. Like I said earlier, you can have headphones on, and until you need to surrender your bag with your cell phone and things like that, you can listen to music to help tune people out. That's one of my favorite things to do.

And if you really do need to talk to somebody, choose like a friend or two that you know is not going to be crazy basically. I have one friend, and we talked every night to kind of debrief the exam, but we knew that she wasn't going to be crazy.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah. I called my mom.

Lee Burgess: Which is great too. I mean, it's like, whoever you need to talk to that's not going to feed into the anxiety and is going to be calming, that's who you want to talk to.

Brittany Raposa: Definitely.

Lee Burgess: You and I have both met a lot of students who have trouble with anxiety day of. And [anxiety is something that I think almost everyone has to deal with](#) with the exam, but it can really come up when you're studying. And if you're a repeat taker, it can really kind of as you get closer to the test get more and more intense. So I think that it's very important just like practicing a lot of these other things for exam day, we've been talking about getting up early, what you're going to eat, you also need to focus on practicing how to calm yourself during the exam, which is not always hard to do, but you have to practice it so your body knows what the response is. And it doesn't have to be hard. I mean, it could be breathing exercises. Even just taking 10 deep breaths should calm your nervous system. Sometimes you can just stretch in your seat, move your head around, close your eyes for a few minutes. I'm a big fan if you have time to just ... I sometimes would walk to the bathroom, wash my hands, and walk back just to like have a few minutes to get up out of that desk. I don't know. What have you seen work for your students, Brittany?

Brittany Raposa: I think that one of the things that works for them a lot is just kind of before the exam just really going in with a positive outlook. I can't stress enough how that helps your anxiety in the exam room. And so if you just kind of, I mean, you could even look at the mirror and tell yourself that you did everything you could, that you studied hard, and that you're going to do the best you can today. And then when you're in the exam room, I think that just kind of decreases some of the anxiety if you're positive from the outset and positive going in.



And I think within the exam room [breathing exercise](#) has helped students tremendously, just taking like a ... just kind of putting their head back for maybe less than a minute and doing some deep breathing in and out to just kind of catch their place. And I think that really helps them bring it back into focus. And then they can just kind of continue, and that anxiety is a little bit suppressed now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You're sending oxygen to your brain. What happens when the anxiety really kicks in is your body does not send oxygen to your brain, which is why you get more panicked, and your mind goes blank, and things like that. So some of the best things you can do is just take a few minutes and just send some oxygen to your body because then it will go ahead and flood your brain with oxygen again, and you're going to be like, "Oh, right. I do know something. I do. I didn't forget everything I had studied for the last few months. It's all in there."

Brittany Raposa: Right. I agree. And I think, yeah, just kind of even maybe coming up with a couple of mantras to say to yourself in the exam room beforehand, in case it happens, just kind of tell yourself, "Nope, I can do this. I studied. I put in all of the work, and I'm fine. I just have to keep going," type of thing. So if you go in with some things that you're to tell yourself, really positive things, and if you find yourself needing to tell yourself, I think it's okay.

Lee Burgess: I think that's a really good point. Well, with that, we are out of time. But I wanted to take a second to remind our listeners to check out our blog at [BarExamToolbox.com](http://BarExamToolbox.com), which is full of helpful tips to get you prepared and help you stay sane as you study for the bar exam. You can also find information on our website about our [courses](#), [tools](#), and [one-on-one tutoring programs](#) to support you as you study for the UBE or California Bar Exam. Thank you, Brittany, for joining us today. I think your insights were well welcomed, and I always get a little nervous whenever I talk about the bar days.

Brittany Raposa: I know. Me too.

Lee Burgess: I know. It's like some residual anxiety or something.

Brittany Raposa: Yeah, and it's like I sometimes I feel just kind of like, I feel like I'm a cloud, a dark cloud when I talk about the bar-

Lee Burgess: I know.

Brittany Raposa: ... the bar exam.

Lee Burgess: I know. But if you enjoyed this episode of The Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast and it didn't make you too anxious, 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're still in law school, you might also like to check out our popular [Law School Toolbox Podcast](#) as well. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at [lee@barexamtoolbox.com](mailto:lee@barexamtoolbox.com) or [alison@barexamtoolbox.com](mailto:alison@barexamtoolbox.com). Or you could always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at [BarExamToolbox.com](http://BarExamToolbox.com). Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.

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