



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we are talking about how to support your significant other or loved ones during the bar exam. 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](#), [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the Career related website [Career Dicta](#). 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](#)! 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.

With that, let's get started.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Today we're sharing some tips for the bar exam significant other. So, of course the bar exam is incredibly challenging for you, the person actually taking the bar, but many significant others or close friends and family find being around a bar studier to be well, kind of challenging, shall we say?

Lee Burgess: Shall we say.

Alison Monahan: So, years ago we published some [blog content](#) on this [topic](#) and we actually still get a lot of questions and comments about it so clearly this is something people are thinking about. Your loved ones are struggling to deal with you, so you can either share some of these tips with them so that they can help you or feel free to point them to this podcast and they can listen on their own.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Or they can read some of the comments, the lengthy comments, on some of these posts.

Alison Monahan: We get people emoting.

Lee Burgess: We actually do. There's a lot of like relationship advice being asked for.

Alison Monahan: And I think, in general, it's because people actually do want to help, they just don't really know how.

Lee Burgess: I think that's true. So, first I think it's important as the bar studier to understand why it is hard to be around someone studying for the bar.

Alison Monahan: And to recognize you're probably not at your best.



- Lee Burgess: You're not your best self, you're not. I wasn't my best self.
- Alison Monahan: I think it would be a very, very rare person who was their very best self while the process of studying for the bar exam.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So I think the first thing to note is you're going to be stressed. I think everybody's stressed when they're studying.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's not a pleasant process.
- Lee Burgess: No. You often might seem to be distracted because you're a little bit self-absorbed and selfish because you're working towards this one very significant goal.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you have to be selfish.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: That's kind of the only way you're going to pass.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. So that can be frustrating to be around because you're not taking into consideration a lot of other people's feelings because you're very focused on what you're doing and the importance of what you're doing.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And it's easy to allow the importance of what you're doing to also grow outside of the scope of really, it's just a test.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, yeah. Well, keeping it in perspective is a whole different problem but I think for most people studying is the major thing happening.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, of course. I think it's a balance. You do have to be selfish but also at the same time you have to keep perspective and realize that, you know, you're not saving the world right now.
- Lee Burgess: No. I think some people might feel like they're possibly borderline depressed while they're studying.
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Lee Burgess: I think my husband, who was my boyfriend at the time that I was studying for the bar exam, came home one night and I was laying on the couch in the dark watching TV and he said I looked like an anti-depressant commercial because I had this like this blank stare on my face.



- Alison Monahan: The blue light.
- Lee Burgess: The blue light of like flashing on my face and he's like-
- Alison Monahan: A blanket.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. He's like, "What is happening to my girlfriend?"
- Alison Monahan: She used to be fun. What happened?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, yeah. He even said as part of our wedding vows, "I knew that I wanted to marry you when you were completely insane studying for the bar exam and I still loved you and wanted to be with you," or something along those lines.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's very meaningful.
- Lee Burgess: It was very meaningful, yeah. So, yeah, they notice. They notice. You're probably also tired because you're working really hard and I think if you're working and studying at the same time, which a lot of repeat takers are, I think that's even a bigger deal, that you're exhausted and so you're not going to have as much energy to invest in other people.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And just mental fatigue, if nothing else. I mean it's amazing how tired you can get just sitting at a desk studying for eight hours a day.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's exhausting. I think a lot of times, bar studiers only want to talk about the bar and what happened during when they're studying for the bar. I had a friend of mine who is a professional musician and she was, well, she's married to him now but she was dating someone who was studying for the bar. She jokes that she was going to be qualified to take the bar by the time he got to the exam because she was helping quiz him, they were talking about it. She was like, "I feel like I've studied for the bar."
- Alison Monahan: I mean she probably could've passed at that point.
- Lee Burgess: She probably could've passed, yeah, she was a very smart person. I think that bar studiers always seem to have study materials with them.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, like flashcards at dinner sort of thing. You're like, "Really? Just take a break."
- Lee Burgess: I know. But I think it can be very omnipresent, you can't get away from it because you're always got your study stuff around you. And when you're studying long hours, although if you've been listening to this podcast and read



our blogs, you know that we recommend that you don't just study all the time. You need to take breaks. But it can feel like you don't have enough time to connect with your loved ones and that can be frustrating for the people who are trying to connect with you and count on you for things.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think it's hard to also, even if you do say, "Okay, we're going to go on date night," or whatever it can be really hard to kind of wind down and not be so stressed out and like actually enjoy each other. I mean, I can definitely see your bar exam date night turning into a huge blowup fight because like you're stressed and you're tired and you're like, "This other person is not doing whatever I need them to do right this second. I took this time off to be with them and like now they've just ordered the wrong appetizer."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's good to go to a movie. You can't fight during a movie. Can't fight during a movie. So, my funny story about my poor husband was, you know, I'm the daughter of two lawyers and so when I was studying for the bar my parents came to visit for the weekend. And they were very concerned about my husband.

Alison Monahan: Not about you.

Lee Burgess: Not about me. They knew I'd be fine. But they were very concerned about him and so they were like, "How are you doing?" And I'm like, "Hey guys, hey, I'm the one doing the work."

Alison Monahan: I'm the one doing the work.

Lee Burgess: And Shawn's like, "Thanks for asking. Let me tell you, it's really bad. She's super kooky." I also think my mom told him that he wasn't allowed to break up with me during the bar no matter how bad things got. If he was going to break up with me, he had to do it after the test was over. So, I didn't think that was on his to-do list but my mom was very concerned about that. But they were very concerned about him because they had each been the bar exam significant other.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Because they went to law school at different times and so they appreciated what it was like to live with someone who was studying for the bar and, you know, my husband didn't have lawyers in his family. So he's just kind of like, "I thought you did well in law school. Like why are you so upset?"

Alison Monahan: Like why are you so worried about it? I think that's like for many people studying and one of those frustrating things where there's parents or significant



others saying, "Well, what are you so worried about? I mean, I'm sure you'll pass."

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You're like that is the most infuriating thing you can possibly say to me right now.

Lee Burgess: You don't understand. People from Harvard don't pass.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. That's not a pathway you want to go down.

Lee Burgess: No. It's a lot but I think you should have awareness as the bar studier, you are a lot and it's your job to try and like keep your own sanity but I think you need to have compassion for the people that are around you and might depend on you that you can be a lot. You probably need to take some times and think about what you can do to maybe make their life a little bit easier. So, Alison, you made the suggestion of like date nights or carving out time and trying your best to be present so they can be reminded of the person that they did love going into this experience.

Alison Monahan: Also apologizing in advance.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, setting expectations, I think that's really important.

Alison Monahan: Just basically saying, "You know what? The next two months like I'm probably not going to be my best self and I would appreciate your support and here are some ways that you can be supportive and I also understand that if you don't want to be around me."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean there are people who specifically like will try and leave town to study, to just kind of free themselves from the obligations to people that they care about. But, I think, especially for repeat takers life can often be much more complicated when you are sitting through the exam after multiple tries because life has continued on.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: You may have a job and you're studying. You may have a significant other and you are studying. You may be pregnant and you are studying. You-

Alison Monahan: Small children.



- Lee Burgess: You may have small children, you may have pets, you may have an ailing family member that you're caring for. I think that it's very important to realize that all of these folks need to be tended to and they don't need have, no expectations, they just need to understand what you're going through and then you need to carve out time to give them the minimum of what they need because when all this is over you want your family life to still be there.
- Alison Monahan: You don't want to have burned all your bridges.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. These people still need to love you and be able to move on with you.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's right. I think everyone needs to recognize this is probably not going to be the happiest time of your relationship but if you get through it, maybe you can actually strengthen things and ... It's not like it's going to be the only hard thing you ever go through probably.
- Lee Burgess: No. And you know when you go back through, if you do go through some of the comments of the people who've mentioned struggling with their significant others on those blog posts, a lot of the common, I think, experiences are that the bar studiers cut off their significant others because they just don't have space to give them energy. And I think that that probably is a little extreme for most people.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean I can see the point if you're like this person is actually just annoying me or whatever but I mean, I think ideally, it's a balance. I mean, you know, as with many things, I think communication and clarity are probably the key here. And really, just having that conversation of like what do we think this is going to look like? It sounds like you were living with your now husband at the time so you don't have the option to just like not talk to him, you're going to see him.
- Lee Burgess: Right. And we actually moved in together just a few months before I studied for the bar. It was a big leap of faith.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I tried not to study at home, that was one of my things that I tried not to do.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So let's talk through some sort of practical tips from either the perspective of the significant other if you're listening to this or you know things you might want to offer if you're the bar taker that your significant other might consider.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, I think if ... So, if you're the significant other, I think this is a great opportunity for you to invest in other relationships.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: Because your bar taker is going to be limited in their capacity to be the rock for you that you may want them to be. So, it's a great time for a girl's trip, or guy's trip, to go visit college friends, to go visit family, it's just a great time-
- Alison Monahan: To find a therapist.
- Lee Burgess: To find a therapist. I think it's a great time to do something else with somebody else.
- Alison Monahan: Hobbies, you know. It's a great time to join your soccer league.
- Lee Burgess: Take a class.
- Alison Monahan: Take a class.
- Lee Burgess: I know.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, do a pottery class, whatever, just get out of the house.
- Lee Burgess: Train for like a race, do one of those team in training things because you have lots of time that you train ... I've never done one of those things but my friends who do, they take a lot of time.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and it's very bonding.
- Lee Burgess: It is very bonding. So, it's a great time to invest in other social activities. I think you want to also think about carving out some time that you can do things with your significant other to get them away from studying and get them out of the house. We recommend that all bar studiers take breaks even, I know that some bar review companies which thankfully do not listen to this podcast, would say you have to study seven days a week, we do not believe in that. We believe that you should take time off.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely.
- Lee Burgess: And do, I used to take every Sunday off when I was studying and my goal was to do something that didn't involve me sitting at a desk and being at a computer.



Alison Monahan: Right. Well, that's what I was going to say. I think you have to be careful too about what are you doing when you get out of the house. I think the suggestion you go to a movie is fantastic because that can like reset your brain, anything physical, going outside and hiking, biking, even just taking a long walk maybe in a neighborhood that you're not so familiar with so you're seeing new things, try a new coffee place. It doesn't have to be super complicated but just something that's going to reset, go to a museum-

Lee Burgess: Cooking, cooking can be fun.

Alison Monahan: True. Although that probably doesn't get you out of the house.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: But at least shop for ingredients. You can go to the farmer's market.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, go to the farmer's market.

Alison Monahan: Shop for your ingredients, like come back, pick a recipe-

Lee Burgess: Instapot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Then you can actually like cook for the weekend or for the week ahead, that kind of thing. Yeah, but I can see people like, "I'm taking a break and I'm just sitting around watching TV." It's like yeah, you need to do something a little more active.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so as the person who's not studying, I think it's a great idea to take it upon yourself to agree when those break times are going to be and then come up with suggestions of things that you-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, actually make that plan.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, make the plan because the bar studier is not going to invest time in thinking of like what are the four meals we can make ahead for the week and then go to the farmer's market.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean if you're distracted and someone's asking you questions about like ... A friend of mine last week when I was moving kept asking me like, "When are we going to go to Tahoe?" And finally I was like, "I can't think about this right now," like this is ... But then she sent me something that was like if you want to buy this discounted ticket, here's the link and I'm like, "Oh, great. I'll totally do that and then we can plan our trip."



Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But there's just like a limit to how many decisions you can make when you're in one of these scenarios.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Decision fatigue and willpower fatigue are totally real things and so as the person who is hopefully less stressed-

Alison Monahan: And has more time.

Lee Burgess: And has more time that you can do these things. And if, I think, the cooking or the doing something out of the house, or exercising, or something like that, that's also going to help your bar studier because it's going to keep them like healthier and happier and then everybody is going to do better.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. The one thing I would caution you is definitely get buy-in on these things. Don't spend a whole week planning some super elaborate trip to like go to the beach in the town that's down the road two hours and then be like, "What do you mean you can't take all day Sunday off?"

Lee Burgess: That's true. That's true.

Alison Monahan: Plan ahead.

Lee Burgess: Plan ahead, plan ahead. Have honest dialogues about that. And another thing that you can do is try and, especially if you live with your significant other, but try and take some responsibilities away from that person, make their life easier.

Alison Monahan: Cooking, cleaning.

Lee Burgess: Cooking, cleaning, if they do the laundry, offer to do the laundry while they are studying or something like that just to lighten their load so when they're not studying they can be spending time with you or doing something fun. I think one of the traditions around bar prep that is great is the bar trip.

Alison Monahan: Oh, yes. The one upside of taking the bar exam is you get to go on vacation after.

Lee Burgess: Go on a vacation and so I think it's a great idea to plan a bar trip. I did not plan my bar trip and it was great.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I did.

Lee Burgess: Oh, you did?



- Alison Monahan: I took two bars, I took two bar trips.
- Lee Burgess: Wow. Way to be an overachiever.
- Alison Monahan: Well, I was like, "I'll take this bar but only if I get a trip out of it." No, actually that's not true. I don't think I got a ... No, that's not true. I took a bar trip and then I took a post-clerkship trip.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, okay.
- Alison Monahan: When I took my second bar exam, I went back to work the next Monday and that sucked.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that does kind of suck. But I think it is great to have that thing to look forward to and if you're looking for things to fill the time while your significant other is studying, you can plan something that can rekindle the fact that you like each other.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. It is nice, I mean I remember my friend got married the weekend after the bar and so I literally like got on a flight and like flew to their wedding, which seemed kind of intense but it was also great because I was just like, it's a whole other world like I'm just out of that bar horribleness and now I'm with my friends and hanging out and like having something that was such a break was really great because by the end of the wedding you're like basically completely over thinking about the bar exam. I think I then went to like Honduras or something but-
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I mean I remember I think two days post-bar I was sitting in a bar in Dublin drinking and I just remember like being like, "Thank goodness I am like somewhere else drinking this amazing drink."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think just having ... It doesn't have to be anything amazing, it just has to be like even going a weekend away camping or whatever. Something that like resets.
- Lee Burgess: Something that is not in your home or wherever you've been studying and is away from your books is-
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, maybe offer to pack up their books for them.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, that's a good one.
- Alison Monahan: And put them into the garage.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, because those are scary to come home to.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you don't want to see those again but you also don't want to get rid of them in case you fail. That's actually, people have such hang-ups about that.
- Lee Burgess: Oh yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Like they don't want to look at the books but they also don't want to get rid of the books. I feel like that is definitely a task that if like you were the significant other you can be like, "Why don't I put these into a plastic container with a lid so they'll be safe and take them out of your sight line."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: That would be much appreciated.
- Lee Burgess: I think it definitely is. If you are the bar exam studier and you can't get your significant other to listen to this podcast, I think it is helpful to be very specific with your suggestions of how they can help because I think what happens to a lot of people is if you're withdrawing because you need to do this very self-involved thing which is to pass this test it's very hard to not take that personally so you need to be like, "I can't do X, Y, Z that we usually do but I can do this and you could help me by doing this." Because, I think, a lot of the feedback we've gotten from the comments on blog posts and talking to people who have been in this position is they're confused about what's going on.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And to be honest, like some of this might just be they're being lazy but even then, particularly, if say your significant other's used to you doing the emotional work and the planning and managing the relationship and suddenly you're not able or willing to do that, this could be a good opportunity for them to develop some of those skills.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. That's true. It could be a growth opportunity.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: So, something I did not experience but friends of mine did was what do you do if you and your significant other are studying for the bar together?
- Alison Monahan: It's like a whole other level of hell.
- Lee Burgess: It's a whole other level of hell because I think that this is a challenge on so many levels because maybe you've dated through law school so maybe you're even use to studying for exams together but typically, my friends who had significant



others in law school they didn't take all their classes together. They weren't preparing exactly the same way. And the high stakes nature of the bar just kind of makes this whole situation much more complicated. So you really want to take in some considerations and talk about it very honestly and openly before so you set each other up for success. I don't know, what do you think are some suggestions of the conversation you should have before bar prep?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think, me number one, I think you've got to figure out where you're physically going to study and like how this is working or not working for you once you try it. Is it possible that you can have separate workspaces in the same house? Do you want to study at home? Do you want to study in a library? Do you want to study in the same library? Do you want to study in adjoining cubicles? Do you want to be in completely different buildings? You've really got to think through this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And it's very easy to distract each other.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah.

Lee Burgess: I have tried to share an office with my significant other, we have both worked out of the home at the same time. I am incredibly distracting not because he is distracted by me but because I become distracting.

Alison Monahan: Let's face it, studying for the bar is not like the most fun and exciting experience but if there is a possible distraction, most people will probably take it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: And then you're like, "We'll just have a quick conversation about who's going to unload the dishwasher," and then maybe we need to go for a coffee break and then suddenly half the day is gone, you haven't actually studied.

Lee Burgess: Right. And so that can be problematic. So you want to think about how you can set yourselves up for success and it may be that one of the things you have to do is like studying at home is a no go because there are too many opportunities for life distractions or talking to each other or it makes home a safe place where you can kind of come back together and leave the studying to the side and not have to suffer through rehashing the study day once you're at home.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I kind of think that's one of the scenarios where each person really has to take responsibility for themselves and really figure out like maybe you don't even do the same program or something and then there can be anxiety around are we making the right choices. I have heard from some people who failed where they say they studied with a significant other and that person



passed and they didn't and they're upset about that for various reasons. They made me do this or they ... No, they didn't make you. You chose to do that.

Lee Burgess: Right. And it's also important to think if you're both studying and especially if you share any sort of life responsibilities, you better lay out the game plan of like how stuff's going to get done.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: Because if one person is in charge of like all the cooking and all of this stuff, they might be a lot of ... You might be resentful and then if your results don't go well, you're going to be resentful and that's not going to help anybody's relationship.

Alison Monahan: No.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. No, I think you basically have to be like this is what needs ... This is what I need and this is what it sounds like you need and do we need to hire a housekeeper? Do we need to get takeout? Like what are the other alternatives here?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So just like with all significant others or family members, I think it's a good idea to kind of schedule fun study break activities so you guys can decide what you like to do together but then agree maybe Sunday's your day off or Sunday afternoon's your day off and you're going to go do the thing that you like to do together, but schedule it and block it off on your calendars and protect it because I think it can be very easy to just eat into that time and that's a mistake. Because, hopefully, the time with your significant other makes you feel better.

Alison Monahan: Hopefully.

Lee Burgess: Hopefully. So investing in that time-

Alison Monahan: If you're both studying for the bar exam, I don't know.

Lee Burgess: I don't know but investing in that time should kind of recharge your batteries and so you want to be able to schedule that and protect that time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think along those lines, this is definitely a time to have self-compassion and also compassion for the other person. You can have your mantra of like what we're doing is really hard but I know that we're going to get



through it and I appreciate your support or whatever like you can put that on a little poster board and read it every morning.

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: Because it is a really hard experience and I think sometimes people maybe underestimate how unpleasant it's going to be and then they feel bad and there's added stress because they're like, "Well, we're fighting all the time," or "We're stressed out all the time." It's like, "Of course you are, you're both studying for the bar," like "What do you expect?"

Lee Burgess: Right. And you just do not need that. You need to simplify that part of your life and try and table things.

Alison Monahan: Table big fights.

Lee Burgess: Table big fights.

Alison Monahan: Big discussions.

Lee Burgess: Big decisions, you know, like that can also happen-

Alison Monahan: Sometimes people are also moving. One person, you've gotten a job someplace and you're moving, I mean I hear those stories when people don't pass like, "Well, we graduated and then we immediately had to move across the country and we're trying to set up a place and trying to study." You know, you have got to be realistic here.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think you have to be compassionate and you also need to make sure that you are being supported. So let's say your significant other isn't stepping up to be the person you wished they would be, that's cool, you're not going to fix them so you need to go find other people who can provide you that support.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. It's like, you know, if you have very different study styles like you like to study in your group, your significant other prefers to go off into a closet in the library where they don't have to see anyone for a week maybe you need to find yourself a study group. Like it's cool, but you can't try to make that other person come out of the closet and go study with you because that's what you prefer, like that's not their preference.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think you really just have to own this experience for yourself. In the end, it's you alone in the exam room and there's nothing you can do about how your significant other's doing about because you had to do the laundry, you studied less.



Alison Monahan: Well, or I think people are going to do the flip side which is like trying to take on all that emotional labor for this other person of like are they doing enough? Like I'm scheduling, I'm going to make their schedule and make sure they study, you're not their parent.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Like you're their significant other. Like they're a grownup, they need to deal with this. And if they're not, well that's probably a conversation you need to have.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And sometimes you might find that you just really need to give each other space like it is absolutely possible that you're not going to do great functioning in this environment but it's temporary. It's going to pass.

Alison Monahan: Literally, you can even move to a hotel for a couple of nights every now and then, go to a friend's house who's not studying for the bar and use their spare bedroom for a couple of days. It doesn't mean that you don't care about each other, it just means that you're driving each other nuts.

Lee Burgess: And I had friends in law school who, unfortunately they're no longer married, but when we graduated, they were still dating and they didn't speak to each other like during the bar days.

Alison Monahan: You mean during the exam days?

Lee Burgess: During the exam days, they were in different ... We all took it at the same location but they were like across the room. I'm like, "What is she doing over there?" And then someone was like, "They're not speaking," I'm like, "What?" But they were really concerned that if something happened to one of them, that it would just snowball and then they would both be completely derailed so they just chose not to speak for the California Bar, which was then three days, which seems a little intense but they both passed.

Alison Monahan: I feel like you got to do what you got to do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So I think a lot of this advice does apply to other people who are depending on you but overall, I mean, if you have children, if you have other family members who are depending on you, I think this idea of setting expectations up front before shit hits the fan.

Alison Monahan: Well, that's also a place to pull in your support network. If you have children that need to be taken care of, you need to make sure they're taken care of one way or the other.



- Lee Burgess: Yep. And, but I think, you have to have discussions with everyone in your universe about boundaries and what you need and make sure you set yourself up for success. I mean, we've also had heard from people who failed because they've had a family member go through a crisis and then they've been very distracted by that. Well, life happens. There's nothing you can do about that but as much as you know that certain of these challenging things are going to happen or that individuals in your sphere need things from you, you just need to decide what those boundaries are going to be and try and set yourself up for success by being honest in the beginning.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I mean there's a difference between like, a family member has a medical emergency, and like, you didn't think that anyone needed to go to the store to make food. Some of these are predictable like let's figure out how we're going to eat, let's figure out like how we're going to get the house clean, let's figure out how we're going to do laundry. I mean you need clothes, you need food, you need a place to live, your car might need gas, like these are predictable problems.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. But what is probably a terrible idea is just cutting off your significant other, not talking to them if you're long distance, like you do want to carve out some time with them if you'd like them to be there when the exam is done.
- Alison Monahan: Well, it might be revealing of the relationship.
- Lee Burgess: That's possible. But if you think you would like them to be there at the end, it's probably a good idea to spend a wee bit of effort to let them know that they're still loved.
- Alison Monahan: True, but it could be an opportunity to see that maybe they're not the person who's going to support you and your goals.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, but don't take on a breakup during the test. That's a terrible idea.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, don't make that decision a couple of weeks after the exam, just give yourself a deadline of like two weeks post-exam when you're not making any major life decisions, I think is a generally good idea.
- Lee Burgess: I think that's a wonderful idea. And you know, because you have to set these boundaries even around things outside of significant others so for instance, sometimes I'll have bar studiers write to us on the website or something like that and say, "What am I going to do because I don't think I want to be a lawyer and I'm studying for the bar?" And I'm like, "This is not the time to have this conversation."



- Alison Monahan: Think about this later, pass and then decide.
- Lee Burgess: It's like, "You know what's great? Having a law license. That's the only thing you need to do right now. Like get the law license, you can decide to do something else later."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, like this is not a productive thing to be spending your time on right now, just put that aside, not to say you don't need to think about it just put it aside for right now and focus on what you need to focus on.
- Lee Burgess: So, like don't decide that this person is or is not the person you want to spend the rest of your life with.
- Alison Monahan: No. Or like this is not the time to be having like discussions about when you're going to have children.
- Lee Burgess: No. Moving in, like how many kids do you want, no, money, like no. So anyway, do what you can but be honest, set boundaries, and communicate, and then you guys can weather the storm and then maybe you two at your wedding someday can have your significant other talk about the bar in their wedding vows.
- Alison Monahan: Wow. Dare to dream.
- Lee Burgess: I know. #lifegoals.
- Alison Monahan: Okay.
- Lee Burgess: And with that, I think we're out of time. It's really good he doesn't listen to this podcast. I want to take a second to remind you to check out our blog at BarExamToolbox.com, which is full of helpful tips to help you prepare and 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. If you enjoyed this episode of the Bar Exam 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 are 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, or Alison@BarExamToolbox.com. Or, you can always contact us via our website contact form at BarExamToolbox.com. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon.



Resources:

- [Tips for the Bar Exam Significant Other](#)
- [Are You and Your Significant Other Studying for the Bar Exam Together?](#)
- [Supporting the Bar Exam Studier in Your Life](#)
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