



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today we are talking about avoiding or dealing with burnout while studying for 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](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy this 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.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Today we're talking about how to avoid burnout, or deal with it if you're already suffering from burnout, while you're studying for the bar exam. So, Lee, to get us kicked off, how do you know if you're suffering from burnout?

Lee Burgess: Well, it's funny, because I started to write this podcast script and the first thing I was like, "I know what burnout is", but I was like, "Google, what is burnout?" And there were all these articles about being burned out at your job. And I'm like, "Oh, these all sound like lawyers." It was just kind of a funny thing that I think we often don't ask ourselves, what burnout actually feels like.

Alison Monahan: What are we really talking about?

Lee Burgess: What are we really talking about? So, I think that the things that happen when you're suffering from burnout – you have trouble focusing or even getting started with your work. Maybe you're getting up in the morning but you are delaying getting started, or you find yourself wasting a bunch of time on the Internet, or your mind is constantly wandering, or you're just feeling like you're generally wasting time. That is definitely a big warning sign that you're suffering from burnout. Another thing you want to watch for is becoming overly negative or critical of yourself or your bar prep. I think that this can be tough because lawyers are typically overly critical and negative.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: So, it can be a tough one to define.



- Alison Monahan: Right, and also I think people sometimes, if they're taking a big commercial course, they start to feel like they're failing because they're not keeping up with every single assignment. So that can become a vicious spiral of...
- Lee Burgess: "But then why am I doing any of this?"
- Alison Monahan: "Why am I doing any of it? You're so stupid, you're never going to pass. You're lazy."
- Lee Burgess: So, then watch Netflix for a week.
- Alison Monahan: Right, rather than just evaluating the situation and saying, "Okay, yes, I have not kept up with everything they've asked me to do, but let me evaluate what's actually working for me and not working for me and get rid of the rest."
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. You just want to see if things have kind of taken a turn, I guess, and if you are seeing yourself in this negative critical spiral, you do want to take a moment and say, "Do I need to be evaluating what I'm doing, or am I just spinning out of control?"
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think another sign can be if you become very, very irritable or impatient with other people in your life.
- Lee Burgess: Yes. We've all been there.
- Alison Monahan: We have. Actually, I saw a funny comment... Not funny. I saw a comment that came in to the Bar Exam Toolbox. We have a post on dealing with your significant other if they're studying for the bar, which if you're in that scenario, you'll probably feel better when you read the comments, because...
- Lee Burgess: It's probably our most commented on post ever.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and people continue commenting on it. So, I think a certain level of irritation or impatience with the people in your life is probably normal, but then there's this other level. Or again, like you said, if there's been a shift – if for the first couple of weeks you were kind of like, "Okay, I'm not probably my absolute best self, but I'm not a total nightmare to be around." And then suddenly, your significant other offers something like, "Oh, would you like to take a walk?", and you snap at them. That might be a sign that you're getting overly burned out.



- Lee Burgess: And often times for those of us who might be slightly controlling, we can often times feel like if you're really burned out and bar prep feels out of control, you start to maybe lash out or try and control the people or things in your life. But that doesn't go well either.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think sometimes these other people can see signs of this problem before you see it yourself. So, if you're snapping at your significant other because they're asking you to take 20 minutes to take a walk in the evening, they might be seeing that you really need to do this.
- Lee Burgess: Right. You need to walk away from the computer.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and the reality is, if you did do that and you took half an hour off and you walked around the block and you saw the sunset, and then even if you did come back and studied again, you might be in a better head space. So, if you find yourself really snappy with the people who are trying to take care of you, that could be a sign that this is turning a corner.
- Lee Burgess: Another warning sign is just lacking the energy to be productive. We hear this from people: "I've run out of gas. I'm too tired. I can't do this work." That means that you need to take a step back, rest and regroup because pushing through this stuff does not help. And we're going to talk about what happens when you are dealing with burnout here in a few minutes.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think sometimes another sign can be if you're using some sort of substance to help you feel better, or just not to feel anything. So, are you emotionally eating? Are you using drugs, alcohol, whatever it is? I had a friend in law school who in first year would basically go to the library until they closed, and then go to a bar for a few hours, because that was the only way he could sleep. And he eventually realized, "Okay, this is probably not the healthiest way of dealing with the stress of the situation, spending two hours every night in a bar and then waking up with a hangover."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And speaking of sleep, I think that a big change in sleep habits is another thing to look out for – either the extreme of "I cannot sleep", which causes its own problems, or, "I can't get out of bed", which also causes its own problems. So, you really need to see if something has shifted. I mean, when I get really stressed, I don't sleep particularly well. But if that's how you are as a person, you need to come up with coping mechanisms for that and a plan for that – whether it's that you stop studying earlier, that you get off of your devices, that



you read a good book before bed that's not stressful, that maybe you exercise in the evenings.

Alison Monahan: Or in the morning if it helps you.

Lee Burgess: Or in the morning if that helps you get started. Or, if you've talked to your doctor and you want to try taking something like melatonin. There are lots of different options that you can experiment with to solve some of these problems. But lack of sleep is a major, major, major problem. Or, sleeping so much that you can't function is usually a sign of burnout or depression.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think sleep is really when you consolidate your learning. For me, during the first semester of law school exams, I was unable to sleep. I'd block out my eight hours diligently, and then I'd lay in bed for three or four hours, so I was sleeping four hours a night for three or four weeks, and it literally made me crazy. So, if this is something you're dealing with, I think dealing with it sooner or later and talking to a doctor about it makes a lot of sense. I, in the ensuing years, have developed lots and lots and lots of coping mechanisms around this, but it's definitely a sign that something's probably going on.

Lee Burgess: I did, too. I had children and I'm just constantly sleep deprived.

Alison Monahan: Well, I learned Reiki and now I can just fall asleep in 10 minutes, no problem.

Lee Burgess: I know. That's amazing. Well, I've definitely learned to put myself to sleep faster than I used to be able to.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think you mentioned exercise, but if sleep is an issue, I think exercise and figuring out how to time it, and if you're doing that in the daylight and that kind of thing – that can definitely make a huge difference.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, you're right. Other things that can pop up are other ailments, so unexplained headaches, stomach problems are a big one. Some people develop pain or discomfort, back problems. I think hand and wrist problems can be issues, especially for people who are writing a lot. So, if you're all of a sudden finding your body's starting to fall apart, I think that's another reason to take a beat and look at burnout as a real problem.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. And if nothing else, if your immune system's getting run down, you're much more likely to get a cold or something like that. That can then give you the excuse to go to bed for a few days.



- Lee Burgess: Exactly. So, if you're listening to this list and you're like, "Yup, uh-huh, yeah, uh-huh, sounds pretty familiar", why is this so bad?
- Alison Monahan: Well, the problem with burnout is that you may be working really, really hard, but you aren't actually learning that much. So, you may be putting in those hours in the chair, which a lot of these schedules seem like you just need to put in 12 hours a day, but you're not really getting that much out of it. When exam day comes, nobody's going to give you points for the fact that you sat there 12 hours a day and did something that was totally not productive.
- Lee Burgess: Right. I think it also is showing you that your body isn't performing at its best. So, how are you going to exercise your brain to do this very hard thing, to have the endurance to do this two-day exam, and to get this studying done if your body's breaking down? It goes along with that you aren't actually learning that much. It takes a lot of endurance to sit for the test and to be successful, and if you are pushing yourself and you're not doing well, that endurance isn't going to be there.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think you can think of it like somebody who's training for a marathon or something. They don't train hard up until the very last day. They taper off, because they want to arrive on race day feeling excited and rested and ready to go. Ideally that's how you want to show up to the bar exam. You don't want to wheel yourself in in a wheelbarrow, barely able to walk, and you go, "I made it to the start line." No, you want to be fresh and ready to go at the start line.
- Lee Burgess: I feel like somebody should do that graphic of somebody showing up clutching their laptop in a wheelbarrow, getting dumped on the steps of the convention center.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Some people do feel like that.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, for sure.
- Alison Monahan: They're just like, "I made it." You're like, "You haven't made it. You're on day one of the test."
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. You're on hour one.
- Alison Monahan: You can wheel yourself out in a wheelbarrow at the end of day two. Leave it on the field.



- Lee Burgess: I often find, too, that people can hold it together with the burnout through the study process, but then the stress and adrenaline of the exam days just send people over the edge.
- Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. I remember walking to the first bar exam I took in Boston, and it's on the water. I think we took it at the convention center or something. And a law school classmate of mine was literally puking into the Boston Harbor before the exam started. And I was just like, "Oh, wow. That doesn't look fun."
- Lee Burgess: Not good, not good. So, we find that this stuff manifests itself in the exam. And the other thing that happen is then you don't have the ability to really practice things like impulse control, which I would consider under the test saying like, "I couldn't stop writing" or, "I threw out my plan out the window" or, "I went back to all these old habits." We hear a lot of this stuff about, "Yeah, I was well prepared for the test, but everything fell apart on the first day."
- Alison Monahan: You've got to have some stamina for that emotional regulation. That is really such a big part. I mean, what if you get a question and it's totally unfamiliar to you?
- Lee Burgess: What do you do about it?
- Alison Monahan: Do you read the question and do your best, or you just having a complete meltdown and write nothing? If you're already totally burned out and probably at a point where you don't really care that much, it's going to be much more tempting just to completely fall apart, which is basically a way to guarantee you're not going to pass.
- Lee Burgess: Yep. Then the question becomes, "Why are so many bar studiers burned out?" I'll be honest, I think that there were some points where I was dancing around burnout for sure when I was studying, and I had to take some breaks. Around July 4th, for those studying for the July exam – we call it the July freakout, but almost everybody hits some sort of burnout milestone July 4th week.
- Alison Monahan: Well, unless you're me and you just don't start studying until...
- Lee Burgess: Well, you're a special snowflake.
- Alison Monahan: Which I would not recommend. But I was taking Massachusetts, and it had a 90% pass rate. I was working.



- Lee Burgess: And you're a special snowflake.
- Alison Monahan: And I'm a special snowflake.
- Lee Burgess: But I remember my mom. I wanted to take the Fourth of July off or something like that, and go drink wine in the sunshine. And I'm like, "I'm not going to pass if I take this day off." And she's like, "You're studying for two months. One day of drinking some wine and getting some Vitamin D is not the reason why you fail the bar."
- Alison Monahan: No, and I think that's worth keeping in mind. I mean, if you use that excuse every day, of course you're probably not going to pass, but you should be taking time off every week anyway. And if it's a holiday or someone's birthday, or a wedding – those come up during the bar study – just go and have a good time.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. Free yourself so you get the benefits of this time off. But the reason why so many bar studiers are burned out, I think, is because the bar prep companies have created, some of them, what I would call the culture of fear. Everybody is so paralyzed that they have to do this insane list of stuff, that some students find themselves working 12 hours plus a day, seven days a week. And that is insanity.
- Alison Monahan: No. I mean, no one can do that and be productive.
- Lee Burgess: No.
- Alison Monahan: It's literally not possible. So, you end up filling that schedule of 12 hours a day with a bunch of busy work that makes you feel like you did something, but isn't actually going to move the needle. I'd rather have somebody spend five hours a day doing practice exams and really evaluating those, and working on their own outlines and doing some real memorization, than sitting and watching a lecture for eight hours a day.
- Lee Burgess: Right,. And I think the other thing is that you need to be doing self-care and sleeping and eating good food. And if you're studying insane hours every single day, when are you grocery shopping? You're probably eating pizza, and not sleeping, and not moving your body. We just came back from the east coast, and after I had a whole day of sitting on the plane, I was just like, "Ugh."
- Alison Monahan: I know. I still feel the effects of it. I woke up this morning like, "Oh, I feel really stiff."



- Lee Burgess: Oh, I went to yoga yesterday. I felt like I was like a creaky old lady. I was like, "Oh, my hip. My hip." This stuff has an effect on your body and you have to make time for that stuff. And that stuff is a contribution to your preparation and you have to think of it that way.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I think if you do feel like you need to be studying 12 hours a day, seven days a week, you can't take any time off, you're just sitting at your computer or sitting at your couch reading stuff, looking at things – you've really got to evaluate how effective is your preparation. The study process is not fun and it is a lot of work, but you have to find that balance of making it sustainable.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also think that we're seeing more and more people working and studying.
- Alison Monahan: Ugh, so exhausting.
- Lee Burgess: Which is so exhausting, because you are putting in a bunch of time at the office, and then you're trying to reignite your brain in the evenings and on the weekends, and then you have this pressure to make time for yourself is even more intense, and then add children or a family on top of that; even a dog. It's just unbelievable. So, if you are going to be working and studying, one of the things that we talk with a lot of students about is, you can't do this in two months. Some people will, but sometimes you need a little more buffer, because if you run yourself completely into the ground, then you're just wasting a whole bunch of money and stress because you're not going to be able to be ready.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think it's more about finding a balance that you can sustain, and then showing up to test day and actually feeling ready. So, if you find that you've totally dropped any type of self-care and that kind of thing, I think it's worth adding that back in, whether it's meeting with friends or your significant other, taking a break for dinner, going to yoga, going on a jog, doing an exercise class, walking your dog. If you're starting to think, "Oh, I've got to hire a dog walker because I can't walk my dog because I'm studying for the bar – which I've heard – I think you need to reevaluate that. That could be a good part of your day, where you get some exercise, some fresh air, have fun with your dog, and your brain is still processing. That's the problem with just mindlessly studying for many, many, many hours a day is, you don't actually have time for your brain to process what you're supposed to be learning.



- Lee Burgess: Mm-mm (negative). You need to take breaks and do those... We talk a lot in our programming about spaced repetition, seeing things over and over and over and over again. That doesn't mean that you sit down and look at it over and over and over again in one sitting. It's coming back to it over and over again.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and things like sleep and when you're out walking around is when your brain is putting all those pieces together and forming those memories.
- Lee Burgess: So, let's talk about how we avoid burnout. We've mentioned a little bit about taking breaks, taking a day of the weekend off. When we develop study schedules for folks, unless you are working and studying, we typically tell you to take a full day of the weekend off. I would recommend you do something that doesn't include sitting around reading.
- Alison Monahan: Go hiking, go walking by the beach, whatever.
- Lee Burgess: Right, whatever it might be. Play whatever sport game that you like to play with friends. Go play tennis.
- Alison Monahan: Don't just kind of sit on your computer playing video games, Instagram and stuff like that, shopping.
- Lee Burgess: Move away from the technology. But I think those breaks are really important. Hanging out with people who are not studying for the bar is really important. So, talking to friends, talking to loved ones that may be supportive but aren't going to just talk to you about criminal law is very important.
- Alison Monahan: Right, although do be aware that they may be saying all kinds of crazy stuff that's not helpful. Just kind of tune that out.
- Lee Burgess: That's true.
- Alison Monahan: They're trying to be helpful. If your significant other or your parent or whatever says, "Well, I'm sure you'll pass. You're so smart."
- Lee Burgess: I know.
- Alison Monahan: That's not helpful.
- Lee Burgess: That's not what you need.



- Alison Monahan: Just be like, "Okay, great. Thanks." File that away.
- Lee Burgess: Yup. Especially if you're struggling with sleep, you need to not study really late at night. This is a huge mistake people make – they study in bed.
- Alison Monahan: Or they'll do [AdaptiBar](#) on their iPad in bed. It's like, "Okay, you're basically combining every bad idea right there. You're studying late at night, you've got the blue light. You're in bed doing something that's not sleeping." Just don't do it.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I had a physical therapist friend of mine once be like, "Bed is for sex and sleep, and that's it."
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly.
- Lee Burgess: That's what you should be doing in bed. If you are not doing those things, you should not be in bed.
- Alison Monahan: Right. So don't be on the iPad at midnight.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Or don't be watching super stressful things. Everybody's watching Chernobyl on HBO, and I can't watch that right before bed.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you probably want to pick something uplifting and light that you want to watch in the evenings. I personally am a big fan – if I'm feeling stressed out and I know I'm going to have trouble sleeping, I'll watch Nailed It.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, I haven't watch that yet.
- Alison Monahan: Oh my gosh, it's so funny.
- Lee Burgess: I know. We've talked about that.
- Alison Monahan: It's like The Cooking Show, but it's really entertaining, and she always just makes me laugh. So, you want something like that where it's like, "Oh, I don't even remember what I was so worried about, because now I've watched two episodes of these crazy people making these ridiculous cupcakes."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, or go back and marathon-watch something that's very light and fluffy. I did this in law school. I would pick a TV show to watch. Of course, then it was on DVD. We didn't have Netflix back then, back in the olden days.



- Alison Monahan: Netflix actually mailed you the DVD.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. Netflix did mail you the DVD. And then I walked to the video store, which doesn't even exist anymore, where I would go get other ones. But, it can be fun to marathon-watch something, even if it's old school, like Veronica Mars.
- Alison Monahan: I love that show. And there's a new one coming out too.
- Lee Burgess: There is, I know. I follow her on Instagram. But it can be fun to have something that you might even look forward to, to watch, that's not going to be very heavy. Maybe not binge-watching Game of Thrones.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think that'll keep you up.
- Lee Burgess: That will keep you up. So, be thoughtful about what you can do at night to wind yourself down. Another thing that you can consider doing is to really start to be honest with yourself about what you're doing during your study time. We'll have people talk to us that'll say, "I'm studying 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and I can't get anything done." And we're like, "Cool. What are you really doing?"
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Walk me through an average day. So, you sit down and then what?"
- Lee Burgess: And then what? Then, sometimes what comes out is that out of those 12 hours, a lot of that time is either wasted by getting things set up, or doing things multiple times, or reading five outlines, different outlines, instead of sticking to one. So, one thing that you can do if you're just working on your own and you're wondering where your time is going is to use a free online time tracker and just clock in, clock out for a day: "I'm spending two hours reading outlines. I did three hours reviewing practice exams." It's going to tell you a bit more about how you're spending your time. You also might find out that you're spending a lot of time in the library shooting the bull with your friends about how all stressed you are.
- Alison Monahan: Right, or scrolling through Instagram for an hour. I always love the people too who are like, "Oh yeah, I'm comparing the rule statements across the different outlines." Why would you do that?
- Lee Burgess: Please don't do that.
- Alison Monahan: Just pick one.



- Lee Burgess: Just pick one.
- Alison Monahan: It doesn't matter. They're all fine.
- Lee Burgess: They're all fine, yeah. You're not going to memorize the Conviser Mini-Review if you're taking [BARBRI](#). It's 500 pages. You can't do it. So, you've got to just pick your materials and go with it.
- Alison Monahan: Right, they're all fine.
- Lee Burgess: They're all fine.
- Alison Monahan: People pass the bar using every single one of these tools. It is totally fine.
- Lee Burgess: Yes. But you need to be honest about how you're spending your time. You've got to sometimes get away from your computers and books, like we've talked about, so setting out time to do non-bar work related things. And another thing you can experiment with that we're really incorporating a lot into our student's work is practicing mindfulness. I actually had a friend of mine, and we got together and wrote mindfulness curriculum, guided meditations for bar prep related stuff. So, not shockingly enough, it's finding your focus, forgiving yourself, love and kindness, how to sleep, visualizing the exam, fighting self-sabotaging behavior. Even when I was helping her develop this curriculum and we were doing these recordings, I was listening to some of them trying to practice the meditation while I was being the person pressing the recording button, and I'm like, "Oh yeah, self-sabotaging behavior. I should ask ..." My favorite one was you're asking your future self, who's sitting in the exam, if this choice is a good choice. I was like, "That's brilliant. Why did I never do that?" If you find yourself watching an entire day of Netflix, you should ask your future self, sitting in the exam, whether or not that's going to be conducive to you getting there. Now, if you are burned out, maybe that's one way to cope.
- Alison Monahan: Right, which is fine. Make a conscious decision, "I'm taking this day off because I need to do nothing for one entire day", and that's completely legit. Just don't do it for a whole week.
- Lee Burgess: Yup, exactly. So, incorporating a mindfulness practice is another way to help your body refocus and to calm your mind, and hopefully to avoid getting completely burned out. Now, if you are burned out and things are really spiraling and going out of control, it is time to stop and regroup. So, the first thing you need to do is look at your study plan and see where those hours are



going and see what's in and what's out, what's working and what's not, because some changes are likely going to need to be made.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think having the confidence to decide, "Okay, these are the things that are actually going to help me pass and these are the things that are not", is so important. Someone recently reached out to us and basically said, "I don't think the study schedule is working. Can you help me?" And yes, we can help you with that. We can give you a different study schedule based on what you're telling me is not working, to help you try to pass, but that requires a certain level of self-awareness and not just going along and saying, "Well, okay, they know best." You know yourself. You know how you learn. You know when you're really doing focused work and when you're not. So, I think you've got to reevaluate, and hopefully in that reevaluation just drop a bunch of stuff that's taking time but isn't helping. That's absolutely legitimate.

Lee Burgess: Yup. Then it's time to ask for help, and we are really notoriously bad at this. I was just reading a lawyer Facebook group I'm a part of, where more people were talking about, "I'm really bad at asking for help, but..." And I think we all need to work on being better at this, because no one is an island. We all have a village, but this is time to reach out to your village. So, you have a village at school. This could be academic support, maybe you have a bar prep office. But if you are really going down the rabbit hole, you paid a lot of money to go to that school, so why don't you go talk to some of the people there and see if they can help you make decisions on how to pivot? You could hire a tutor, you can reach out to us, like a lot of people do, even midway through your prep to say, "I've got to come up with a new strategy for the next few weeks." And, sometimes you could just solicit help with other things to align your load. Let's say that cooking has become a real drag and you're finding yourself eating pizza all the time, so you feel like crap all the time. Well, that's a great opportunity to reach out to friends and family and put out the call, "I would love it if people would cook me food I could put in my freezer."

Alison Monahan: And/or the Internet economy has pretty much solved this problem; it'll just come at a cost. So this would be a good time to consider if the cost of paying for Instacart or paying for a food delivery service makes sense, and if it's a couple of hundred dollars, that is well worth it. The cost of failing the bar exam is way more than that. This is not a time to nickel and dime on the things that can save you time and energy.

Lee Burgess: Often times, most people in your family or friend network, they want to help, but they have no idea how. So one of the things you can do is be specific and



say, "I need help with X, Y, and Z." And often times they will come help. But you've got to let people help.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think help can even be... For example, when I did the California Bar, I got an unlimited yoga pass and I went twice a day. And at some point somebody noticed at the studio and asked me, "What are you doing here twice every day? You come in the morning and then you come in the evening. How do you have time for this?" I'm like, "Well, I'm studying for the bar exam." They're like, "Oh, maybe you should add a lunchtime session, too." These are people that you may not have a relationship with but they can really help you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so you've got to just think outside the box and do what you can to up your support network. You also want to make sure you're spending time with the right people who are a positive influence. If people are not helping guide you in the right way, it's time to say, "Thank you for being in my life. I'll talk to you in a few weeks."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think setting firm boundaries with people who are... There are any number of reasons someone might not be a positive influence, and this is a time to put on your big person pants and say, "You know what? I cannot go out drinking with you for the next month because I am studying for the bar exam, but we can definitely go out after I finish."

Lee Burgess: Did I ever tell you about the guy who I went on the date with, and I told him I couldn't talk to him for two weeks because I was studying for exams? And then he started calling me the next day, and then I broke up with him.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I had that happen where I told someone that and then they just disappeared. I was like, "Okay."

Lee Burgess: That was better. The disappearing was better than being annoying because then I had to be like, "I can't date you anymore because you can't listen."

Alison Monahan: Which piece of, "I cannot talk with you for this specified period of time" did you not understand?

Lee Burgess: It wasn't like we were in a long-term relationship. We had just started seeing each other. Clearly, it didn't work out. Okay. You also need to look at your diet and exercise because, as we've talked about, that really can lead to your body functioning and being able to handle this stress. Sleep, go get sleep help if you need it. And hey, if you are really spiraling, go to therapy. Your school might still



allow you to get access to school mental resources. I now know that there are all these online therapist that you can now do on your computer. I can't remember what it's called, but that's pretty cool. Anywhere in the world you can just be like, "Hey, I'm having a crisis", and somebody will...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and that person might not be your long-term therapist, but maybe they can be your acute therapist.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly, like, "I'm at starting to have panic attacks. What do I need to do?" Reach out for those resources because I think it's these barriers to entry often of getting help. It's like, "Well, I don't have time to find a therapist."

Alison Monahan: "Why would I find a therapist? I don't have time to meet with them." There should be triage level, like, "I just need to talk to someone who is professionally trained and can maybe give me some insight into what is happening right now, and help me through this." That's all you need. One thing I think if people are super burned out can be very helpful is to get a massage.

Lee Burgess: Oh, good call.

Alison Monahan: Some sort of a body work, whether it's acupuncture, massage. You're holding a lot of this physical tension, so if you work with the body and you release that tension in some way, then hopefully that's going to help your mind as well calm down.

Lee Burgess: I have a massage scheduled on Saturday. I'm already dreaming about it.

Alison Monahan: Great. Yeah, exactly. Something you look forward to, it's probably going to help you sleep better. And if you are feeling really burned out, my first step would... We've given you a lot of stuff to do, but I would just give yourself a full day off.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's probably step one.

Alison Monahan: Basically step one is just stop the bleeding. Give yourself a day off, maybe try to schedule a massage, maybe try to meet with a friend, go for a walk outside, do nothing related to the bar exam. Fall asleep, and then you can get up the next morning and you can start making a new plan. But you need that time off.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. When I first started doing bar prep work, it was my second year of helping people prepare for the bar, and I had this student who I'm still friends with, and she called me panicked. I think it was like the Wednesday before the test. She's



like, "I think all I can do today is go to yoga and go to sleep. That's it. I've reached that point." She sat for the exam three times. It was really she just hit the bottom. I was like, "Great, go to yoga, go to sleep." So, she went to yoga, slept for 12 hours, was able to get up the next day, went back to studying, ended up passing. And I think if she had probably pushed through that yoga/sleep day, that it may not have gone as well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think you know on some level what you need to do, and there's all this pressure not to do it, "I can't possibly take a day off. It's only a week before the bar", or whatever. Just take the day off.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, take the day off. It's totally worth it.

Alison Monahan: That day off is not going to be the reason that you fail, and it might be the reason that you pass.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, any final thoughts?

Alison Monahan: No. I mean, I guess my thought is, just be nice to yourself and try not to push yourself to the point of complete mental and physical breakdown, which definitely I've done numerous times in the past, and it just never ends well.

Lee Burgess: No. And really, when it all boils down to it, try and keep a little perspective. I think that's the other thing when you get burned out, is you lose all perspective.

Alison Monahan: Totally, like "Oh, my life is over if I don't pass." We've worked with a lot of people who didn't pass. Their lives weren't over.

Lee Burgess: Bump in the road. Bump in the road. So, take it seriously, but just remember that this may be one of the harder things that you've done in your life, but you can get through this. It's just a test.

Alison Monahan: It's a test. It's a two-day test.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Alright. Well, we're out of time but I want to take a second to remind folks to check out our [blog](#) at BarExamToolbox.com, which is full of helpful tips to help you prepare and stay sane hopefully 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 exams.



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're still in law school, you might 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](https://www.BarExamToolbox.com/contact-form) at BarExamToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

RESOURCES:

[AdaptiBar](#)

[BARBRI](#)

[Podcast Episode 11: Self-Sabotaging Behavior During Bar Prep \(w/Ariel Salzer\)](#)

[Bar Exam Toolbox Blog: Warning, Burnout Ahead! Take a Pre-Bar Exam Study Break](#)

[Bar Exam Toolbox Blog: Three Tips to Include More Self-Care into Your Bar Prep](#)

[Free Guided Meditations](#)

[Getting Started with Mindfulness](#)

[Harvard Health Blog: Regular exercise changes the brain to improve memory, thinking skills](#)