



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we are talking about the emotional fallout from failing 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 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.

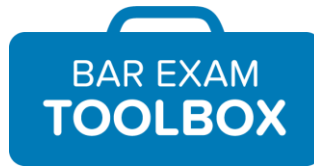
Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about the emotional fallout from a bar exam failure. Well, we spend a lot of time talking to people who have failed the bar exam, and the first thing people typically talk about is how emotionally challenging it can be. So, before we take on the practical next steps for retaking the bar – stay tuned, we have an upcoming podcast on that – today we're going to chat about the emotional aspects of retaking the bar exam. So, if you have just failed the bar exam, this episode is for you. And we want you to take a moment to just breathe, because this is bad – true – it's certainly not ideal, but it's not the end of the world, right?

Lee Burgess: It's not. Even though I know it can feel like it.

Alison Monahan: It can.

Lee Burgess: We talk to so many people the couple of days after failing, and it does just feel devastating. And I totally get it. But I think as much as you can sprinkle a little perspective in there, I think it does help you kind of move through this process that we're going to talk about, so you can be ready to kind of get it together to do again. You will come through this. So many people have. We always have that list – I think we have some blog posts – the [list of all the famous people who have not passed](#). You're in good company, but it's still... It's a lot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think it's almost part of a grieving process, really. This is a type of loss. You had the vision of what it was going to be like, and it's not like that. So, people may feel frustrated that they wasted all this time studying, you might feel like you did everything you possibly could do to pass, and you didn't. There can be even other fallouts, like lost job opportunities or other next steps that were all waiting on this big thing, and that didn't happen. So, this is really a lot to process, and I think you can't move on and kind of set yourself up for that



next step until you actually process it. And sometimes I think people skip this step. What do you think, Lee?

Lee Burgess:

I agree. So, I think there are a lot of things that you can do to move through this, and one of the things that you should think about is what has helped you move through other hard times in your life, because this probably isn't the first hard thing that you've had to move through, although I do think it can sometimes be the first big failure a lot of people have lived through. But there are a lot of things that have helped you in the past, or maybe some new things that you can do to help you process. One of the things that always comes up over and over again when you talk to therapists or you read books on dealing with grief or challenging times, is journaling. When you write things down, it can bring clarity, it also gives you a place to kind of deposit your feelings. I think that that is a really powerful thing. You can even have journals in multiple locations. You can have one at your desk at work, if you have a job, you can have one by your bed. And when you have those very incessant thoughts in your head or you're doing the downward spiral into, "But this, and then this, and then this, and then this", putting it on paper is one way to process it. And I think that a lot of people can find that to be really useful. I also think that a meditation practice, if you've never tried it, is another way to calm the mind. Something along the lines of that can also be hypnotherapy, which is something that I recently tried when I went through something hard, and I found it to be really amazing, to be honest.

Alison Monahan:

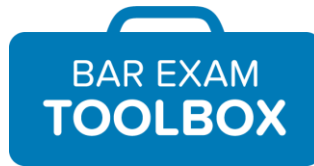
Yeah, my sister is very into it.

Lee Burgess:

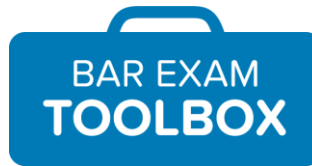
Yeah, I just really found walking through this imagery... It's basically kind of like a guided meditation, by a different name, but it can also be a way to just calm down the worrying thoughts in your mind. And I think that's one of the main things that you're working against here, is just trying to get your mind to process this information, to move past the shock and be able to function, so you can move forward and start making decisions. So, meditation, mindfulness, or even something like hypnotherapy all can be very effective.

Alison Monahan:

Right. You can also throw something like a moving meditation into that. Something like yoga can really help release. I know, I admit I've not been going to yoga for the last year or so, and I can really tell the difference. I do recall that when I would go, I would always walk out being like, "Wow, I just feel so much calmer." And I think if you are in that kind of anxiety spiral, which is totally understandable after you've just found out that you failed the bar, I think just taking that break of doing something physical – it could be yoga, it could be a walk, a run, whatever, but something to just kind of get out that stress in the body, can really be helpful.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's a very good point. Another piece of advice that was given to me by a therapist that I know recently was to not just compartmentalize, but to set aside time each day to process and grieve something hard. So, say, I'm going to give myself 30 minutes, I'm going to give myself an hour to cry, scream, run around, journal, just really be with it all, be in the mess. And then I'm going to end and put myself back together and move through the rest of my day. I think something like this can be really effective if you have a lot of other responsibilities, or if you're going back to work, or you're trying to really show up in other parts of your life – trying to give yourself the opportunity to process but also say, "Okay, now I've got to focus on other things", can also be an effective way to just move forward a little bit.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think it's important too to give yourself right when you find out this information – typically, you find out on a Friday, so you have those couple of days over the weekend. I think that too can be a really good time to just kind of give yourself over to the frustration and sadness and anxiety, and that's when you have your total breakdown. And that's fine, you need to have that. You need to get these emotions out so that you can start processing and moving through. I don't think at that point you have to be stoic and be like, "Everything is going to be fine. It's all going to be fine." And we often start hearing from people like Sunday night, Monday morning, when now they're ready to start, "Okay, what's my next step?" But I think you need those couple of days of just being like, "This sucks. I'm not happy, and this is a miserable situation, and I'm really upset about it."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I agree. I think taking those couple of days, especially if you do find out on a Friday... That's the one nice thing. California doesn't do very many nice things, but they do tell you on a Friday at like 6:00 o'clock, so you don't have to go to work the next morning.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, when you leave the office.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. Although, there were some firms that made people check the results at the office.
- Alison Monahan: I remember people voluntarily doing that in my firm. I'm like, "I want to get home. I do not want to be sitting at my desk in my office when I get this news."
- Lee Burgess: No. Oh my gosh, I was crying and couldn't read the screen when I was checking the results.



- Alison Monahan: The way they phrase it in California is not even that straightforward.
- Lee Burgess: It's awful. Yeah, it's like, "This name does appear on the Pass list for the California bar", I think it was what mine said. My now husband had this large computer, and it was a very tiny font, and I was starting to cry and I couldn't read the very tiny font. I just wanted a big flashing sign or something.
- Alison Monahan: Like, "You passed! Yay!"
- Lee Burgess: I know.
- Alison Monahan: It's all green.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: I remember the first bar I took in Massachusetts, they had announced when they were going to send the results, so I wasn't really focused on it until that day came. And then a couple of days before that, I went home and checked my mail and had this letter from the bar and just figured it's some sort of random thing they're sending out, like, "Thanks for taking the bar exam", whatever. And I open it, and it's like, "Congratulations, you passed." And I'm like, "What?" It was incredibly anti-climactic.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, and then back in the day, when my parents took the bar, they would just mail you the results. And so my parents were living in Southern California, but had moved, and they mailed them, I think from Southern California so all her friends from law school in Southern California got the results first, and she had to wait another day or two till the mail got to where they were living, which seems not cool.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think however you receive them, it will be one of those moments you remember, for good or for bad.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly, for good or for bad. The other thing is, if you're really struggling, this is a great time to reach out to a therapist, if you have one that you've already been working with; or if not, try and reach out to one, especially if you're finding yourself having a really hard time processing, and that you don't have a lot of coping skills and you are finding that you can't get yourself to regroup, then it's time to reach out for help, because experts help people move on from these tough moments all the time. That's what they do.
- Alison Monahan: They've got skills in this area.



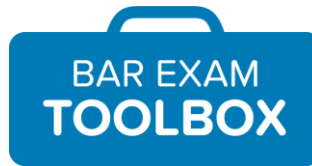
Lee Burgess: They do, and you just don't want to be stuck. I think that reaching out to somebody who can kind of hold that space for you and help march you through this next phase can be very, very helpful. I think sometimes we reach out to our normal support people, but we forget sometimes that they don't always have the skills to move us through something that's fairly traumatic. And I would say for a lot of people, failing the bar is a traumatic event. And so, if your support people can't show up for you in the way that you need, then you've got to go find other people who can support you in that way.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that's a tricky one because you do ideally think, "Oh, my friends and family and loved ones can support me through this", but that's really hard because, a) they don't necessarily really understand the stakes of this exam, so they're probably giving you really frustrating and unhelpful advice like, "Don't worry, you're smart, you can do it", which is pretty much the worst thing you can say to someone who's just failed the bar. FYI, if anyone else is listening to this, do not say that. Or, they're stressed out because if it's a partner, they expected that you were going to pass and now you haven't, so it's this whole thing, and are you going to lose your job? So they may be adding more stress into the situation, not taking it away. So I think you just have to be kind of cognizant of that and hopefully patient with people that you think would be supportive, but maybe are not going to be able to show up for you.

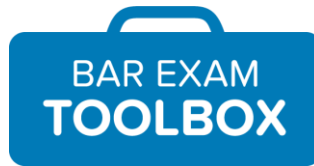
Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true. So, all this can take some time, but unfortunately, depending on when your state releases your scores, you don't have unlimited time. I think that is a whole another thing. We were just talking about in California, if you get your results – I think this year, they're coming out November 12 – if you get results that Friday, yeah, you can grieve over the weekend, but then if you want to hire a tutor or if you want to work and study at the same time, you've kind of got to get your act together and get going pretty quickly. That is maybe cruel and unusual, but it is what it is. And so, depending on when you find out, you've got to basically set some parameters for how long you can initially go through this grieving process, because you may have to start focusing on the practical aspects even earlier than you would want to.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think the reality is, in a state like California, as soon as the results come out, our phones start ringing, basically. Our website starts pinging, that's when people...

Lee Burgess: Yeah, our website starts ringing.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, our phone doesn't ring. We don't give out our phone number. But our website starts pinging us and setting up calls with people who have just found out they failed. So, the unfortunate reality is, if it's three or four weeks later and you're suddenly like, "Okay, I'm ready to go, I've gotten through this", at that point, we're probably going to have to say, "Sorry, we don't really have space." That's just sort of the reality of the situation in California.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think the other reality we hear a lot is that people are working, and so you aren't going to be able to study full-time again, if you did study full-time the last time you took it. And so, you've got to get going, there're just not enough hours. If you're going to be working full-time and studying, you've got to get going soon after you find out your results.
- Alison Monahan: We'll talk about this more in the practical aspects, but that's just something to keep in mind, that time is limited.
- Lee Burgess: Just to keep in mind, yeah. Time is limited. Okay, well, so now you've grieved, hopefully you've set up some calls to figure out what to do next. But you've also got to figure out how to start studying again from an emotional perspective.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: So, the first one that comes up more than I think it would, to be honest, is finding the motivation to do it again.
- Alison Monahan: Right, which is hard.
- Lee Burgess: It is hard, but I think a lot of times people will tell us, "I'm not even sure I want to be a lawyer. Why am I doing this to myself? I may have this job that doesn't require me to be a lawyer, so what's my motivation?" And I'll tell you, if you don't have a motivation, this probably isn't going to go that well. So, you've got to find something.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and sometimes people frankly have [self-sabotaged themselves into failing the bar](#), anyway. I think if you are in that position of like, "I don't even know if I want to do this" – that is not the right mindset to study for the bar. You may as well just put it off, go do something else for a little while and then come back to it when you are actually motivated, because if you're not motivated, this is probably not happening. I mean, it's not an easy task to do, so why even bother?



Lee Burgess: Yeah, and it's expensive. Just to sit for the bar is expensive, even before purchasing any additional help. So, you've got to want this, and you want to be able to go all in. So, you've got to find the motivation. One way that we recommend folks find motivation is actually to write themselves a letter about why they want this law license. It can be, "I just want to have it so I have it" or, "It's the end of my journey of law school." It doesn't have to be anything pivotal, like "I'm going to save the world."

Alison Monahan: Right. It can just be like, "I've put in this time and effort, I put in all this money, and I would like to complete the cycle and be able to have the option to be a lawyer if I want to in the future." That is a perfectly valid motivation.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but we actually have had students in the past where we ask them to write this letter, and then they go back and read it to themselves a few different times when they feel those moments of doubt come up of, "Why am I doing this?" And I think it can be very effective. You can write it in your journal, since you're already going to be journaling to deal with the grief. You can just write your letter to yourself in the journal and go back and re-read it. But I think committing to yourself about why you want to do this is an important first step to finding that motivation.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I've even occasionally heard of people going back and re-reading their law school admission essays and things like that, to really reconnect to that motivation of, "Okay, this test is frustrating and annoying, but there's a bigger picture here, and I just need to figure out a way to pass it so that I can connect to the motivation of that bigger picture."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, we were just talking about getting emotional support from family, friends, or a therapist to get past the initial shock, but especially if you think that you are struggling with incredible feelings of doubt, anxiety, which really can rear its ugly head when you're coming back to study again, depression, especially if you're going to sit for the winter test, you've got all the seasonal affective disorder stuff that gets mixed in there, you've got the holidays, which are tricky, we still have a pandemic going on. There's a lot. It's a lot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, you want to make sure that you have a support system in place to help you work through all of that – whether that be, again, family, therapists, whoever are your trusted counselors in your life. Just make sure that they are able to support you on a regular basis, because you're going to have moments that are tricky in this process.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think it can be great if you have some really trusted friends. They don't even have to be friends from law school, but just somebody that you enjoy being around, you think is uplifting, they're positive. Go ahead and try to set up something weekly with that person, like, "Hey, can we set up a walk every Wednesday night?" or whatever it is, or go to dinner – something that you know that you can look forward to, you can debrief with this person, they're there through the process with you. But you want to make sure that, obviously, it's somebody who's positive.
- Lee Burgess: Yes, yes, yes, yes. So true.
- Alison Monahan: Not somebody who's adding to your stress.
- Lee Burgess: Right, yeah. It's interesting how many times I'll talk to folks who are studying again, and then it'll be like, "I had this really toxic relationship, but I don't have it anymore, so I feel like I'm ready to study again." I think we oftentimes don't give enough credit to how a lot of this other stuff around us in our lives can lead to bad outcomes or can contribute to bad outcomes.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and if you don't have that person who's sort of your go-to positive friend, I think even something like... And this might be harder in the pandemic, maybe some sort of exercise club that you join or something. There are these kinds of cliché things that are for upbeat people, like the running club. I personally hate that, but those people are probably pretty upbeat, because they're getting endorphins.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. It's true, yeah. And that leads really into knowing what your coping mechanisms are. So, if you like being around people, even during the pandemic, you should figure out how to be able to do that. Maybe it is a running club or an outdoor yoga class, or I don't know, playing tennis or taking walks with friends.
- Alison Monahan: Borrow your friend's dog and go to the dog park.
- Lee Burgess: It's so true. Eating well, sleep, things like that are also incredibly important because they play into being able to regulate your emotional wellbeing. But you've just got to make sure that you're taking care of yourself. I will say this morning, my daughter had me up multiple times last night, I knew we were going to do this podcast, and so I made sure that I carved out the time to exercise to clear my very clouded head, or I was going to just not be able to speak in coherent sentences. That was my self-care this morning.



Alison Monahan: You might start crying on the emotional podcast.

Lee Burgess: Exactly, I know. We should talk about sleep deprivation.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I'll go back to the physical here too, because I think for me, that's always so critical. So something even like setting up a massage appointment or acupuncture – those are the kinds of things that if I know I'm going to be in a very stressful ongoing situation, I try to have on my calendar regularly, because I know that it helps me. And it's not the sort of thing in the moment, I'm going to be like, "Oh, I'm going to go and take an hour to go to acupuncture." It has to be on there in advance. So I think just planning around some of this. Or when I was studying for the California bar, I got the unlimited yoga pass, I was going twice a day, they thought I was crazy, then I told them why, and they were like, "Oh, maybe you should come three times." But whatever it is for you that works, I think just doubling down on the things that you know work, is really critical at this point.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And also, as you're setting yourself up to study again, if you're worried about funds and you're like, "Well, I can't afford to go to acupuncture" – I think, especially if you're in an urban area, they oftentimes have a lot of community acupuncture.

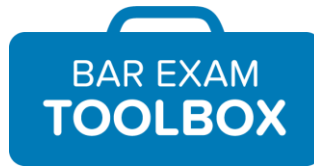
Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: Which is at a much lower price point. Or I remember in college, I discovered massage schools, where massage therapists have to collect so many hours for their licenses. And so, I was getting these massages in Southern California, and they were just like... I might be making this up, but I think it was less than \$50, I think it was something, very... Like \$30. And that was a long time ago, so it's probably more than that, but it was nominal compared to what a massage oftentimes will cost. And so, by getting creative and doing a little research about what avenues may be available for you, you might be able to even find some great opportunities to be able to do self-care without feeling like you're digging yourself a financial hole too.

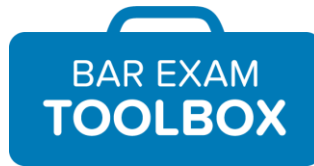
Alison Monahan: Yeah, and a lot of places have a sliding scale, I guess.

Lee Burgess: True.

Alison Monahan: I sometimes go to community agri... Community not agriculture, acupuncture. And I know they have a sliding scale, so if you're like, "I'm not someone with resources right now" – they're perfectly willing to accommodate that.



- Lee Burgess: Yep, exactly. So, another thing that I feel like I've been hearing a lot about in the world, which I personally am paying attention to in my own emotional wellbeing is this idea of self-talk and the language we use to talk to ourselves, and checking ourselves about, "Would we be saying the same things to other people as we are saying to ourselves?" So, if you are saying kind of cruel things to yourself, like, "I'm not smart enough to do this, I don't know why I might be even trying again" – you probably wouldn't say those things to other people, and we should probably talk to ourselves in the same way that we would talk to other people. It is really something that I personally have been trying to check myself, because it's easier to give yourself grace, for some reason, if you think about speaking to yourself as you would another person, of which I seem to be more likely to give kindness sometimes than I am to myself.
- Alison Monahan: Right. No, I think we all typically tend to be harder on ourselves. So, if you do hear yourself saying things that you probably wouldn't say to your close friend, then maybe you ought not to say them to yourself either.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Alright, some other things that I wanted to mention – I've been talking a lot to a lot of different people, and even some of our tutors about impostor syndrome, which I think can also really be triggered by this experience of failure for the bar. I don't know how you would define "imposter syndrome", Alison, but I would typically define it as this idea that whatever you feel like about your identity or background, or who you are as a person, that you don't really deserve to be where you are, I think many of us have felt it for various reasons at various different points of our lives, unless I guess you're feeling very entitled. I don't know.
- Alison Monahan: I think there are some people who never feel this way.
- Lee Burgess: Okay, maybe there are some people.
- Alison Monahan: There are different categories.
- Lee Burgess: Fair point.
- Alison Monahan: No, I think this is really critical. One of the problems is if someone has felt this way, say, all through law school, that maybe they didn't belong and they weren't smart enough to be there – then I think failing the bar can feel like this really terrible confirmation that you were right all along.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's true.



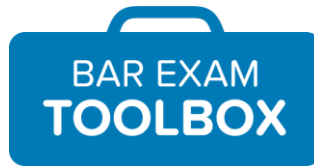
Alison Monahan: That's really tricky.

Lee Burgess: Because then you can really get into this kind of mental spiral that you're confirming this assumption that you weren't really supposed to be here, and then why are you going to try again. Even if you have a lot of people in your life telling you you should try again, really, the self-talk can be very defeatist and lead to some poor decision-making. And so, it's something you really have to be aware of and listen for as you're talking to yourself. And this is something else that's really great to talk to other people about, especially someone who may have...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or therapist.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, or a therapist, somebody who even may have gone through something similar or have overcome something similar. But it is something that I think is popping up a lot for a lot of folks that I talk to, and so I wanted to raise it here. I also think that this can lead to just being very defeatist. I will talk to folks who are sure enough that they want to study, that they have sent my team an email, they have signed up for a meeting with me, they got on the phone. Many people have listened to the podcast, and then they're like, "But I just think that the cards are stacked against me." And it can be for really real things. There are some really messed up things about these big standardized tests. We know that there can be biases built into some of the standardized testing. There's a lot of stuff that makes us not feel good about this type of test being the gateway to the rest of your legal career. I hear you, we are with you. However, right now this is still the gateway, and I do really believe that if someone has made it through law school, especially an ABA-accredited law school, and you found a way to study, you found a way to pass those classes, that this bar is probably within your reach; just you've got to figure out how you need to prepare to get there. And sometimes that means [getting the right accommodations](#), making sure that you're setting yourself up for success, that you're leveling the playing field, whatever needs to happen. But if you go into it being defeatist, it's not going to work out well. It just won't.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think there's this fine line between being realistic and being defeatist. It's totally realistic to say, "I struggled in law school with my writing, and I also think that I have something I need accommodations for, and I'm not sure I'm going to get those accommodations." It's like, okay, that's something we can strategize about, how do we help you get those? Or if you don't get them, how do we kind of alleviate that problem? But I think when you cross that line and you just say, "There's nothing I can do" – at that point, I'd sometimes...



same, I've talked to people who truly believe that they're not going to pass, and I say to them, "Look, I don't think you should do this until you think there's at least a decent possibility you could pass. I'm not asking for a guarantee, but we need something to work with."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You've got to have some sort of buy-in to the process. Even if you feel like the game may be slightly rigged, you've got to have buy-in that you can find a path to overcome.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I completely agree, the game is slightly rigged in a lot of cases, but you also have to look at a lot of people pass, and a lot of people who are similar to you probably pass. And so, what do you need to do to be in that group of people who passes, I think is the key question. Not, are you facing odds that other people are not facing, because you may well be.

Lee Burgess: Right. That's a good point, yeah. So, all of this leads into this idea that you really can't prepare unless you can get mentally ready. I personally would rather you take a season off of sitting for the test to help yourself get there, than to study when you're in a terrible place.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, there's no point.

Lee Burgess: There's no point, because we see this all the time – self-sabotaging behavior. We have students who just refuse to turn in assignments for feedback, we have people who watch Netflix for a week and don't feel like they can focus and study again, folks who just go back to doing the exact same thing that they did before. They will only listen to lectures and not do any of the heavy lifting that they have to do to change the experience. You can have massive amounts of burnout, which I've seen people get so burned out that they can't retain information anymore. They literally sit down and they go blank, they can't function anymore. Some people get incredibly depressed, and some people are just miserable. And when you're miserable, you cannot perform at your best, you can't do it. And so, this is an incredibly important thing, but what's more important is getting yourself into the right headspace to do it. I was just talking to someone who is a clinical psychologist, and she was talking about the idea of mental health being something completely different than dealing with a mental illness. She's like, "Yeah, somebody might have a mental illness, and that is something that is very different." Most of us are just trying to strive to have good mental health, which is very different. It's not that there's anything wrong with you; we're just trying to be as healthy as we can be in a good headspace to do things. And I think that's what you're trying to say – it's like, how can I be mentally healthy? Just in the same way that you're hopefully going to feed your



body good food and move your body and be a part of a community and do all of the things that you need to do to show up. This is just part of that.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think for most people, this is probably not going to be the most pleasant experience. It's not a lot of fun, so I think going into it with a realistic, "Alright, this is going to be challenging. There'll be days where I'm going to be unhappy and probably not going to be super thrilled about doing it" – again, it's just different from, "I'm so miserable, I can't get out of bed, and I'm sitting around crying all day long. And every time I sit down to study, I have a breakdown." That is just not a functional place to be, and if you are kind of in that state or think that's where you're going to be, I think just taking a break until you're not in that place before you study again, because why put yourself through that?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You can do lots of hard things, you will do lots of hard things in your life, this will be one of the hard things, but you do want to make sure that you're doing everything that you can to kind of move through it and get the results that you need. The bar is a little bit different than a lot of other hard things that we do in our life, because oftentimes you're just supposed to move through the hard time – just keep walking and you'll get to the other side, eventually. But the bar is like, you have to keep walking to get to the other side, and also climb a mountain because you have a lot of work to do. It is a very unique challenge, but that's why you want to try and get yourself to a place where you can take it on.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think to get to the point where you can actually sit down and productively study is where you need to be. You don't need to be super thrilled about the situation, but you do need to be in a place where you can productively study, or there's just no point in trying to move forward at this point.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, any final thoughts, Allison, as we have to wrap up?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think just recognizing this is not a great situation for most people, it's a really sucky situation, it's totally normal to feel crappy about it. Every now and then I talk to somebody who's happy they failed, but it's pretty rare. So you have a world of company, everybody who's come back and re-taken the exam and passed has probably gone through some of this emotional turmoil. I think just working through it and recognizing it and trying to get to a point where you're at least able to sit down and be productive, is probably the best goal you can have. It doesn't have to be like, "I'm super thrilled about it."



Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think one of the mistakes I made when I was younger – I'm not going to claim that I'm not still young, I was just younger back then – was I did feel like everything was a race, that you always had to be doing the next accomplishment, there was no slowing down or stopping. And so I do think, as I see a bit more of the world, as I have lived through the hard things that I have lived through, as I've watched other people around me live through challenging times – if you need some space and grace, take it, because life marches on. It's not a race; you need to make sure that you can get yourself to where you need to be. And if you're really struggling, I would rather you press "Pause" on this accomplishment that could be coming down the pipe and make sure that you can do what you need to, to get there. Because failing again, because you're going to not be able to study, is just not another feather in your cap. Just don't do it. Get your act together, and then come back and be able to do it well the next time.

Alison Monahan: I completely agree with that. I think you should take the exam and study for the exam when you're ready to do that. And if you recognize you're not ready to do that at this point, then there is no shame and no harm in postponing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, well, with that, we are out of time. Another deep breath. We made it, we talked about the emotional challenges of the bar. I want to take a second to remind you to check out our [blog](#) 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 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, and we'll talk soon!

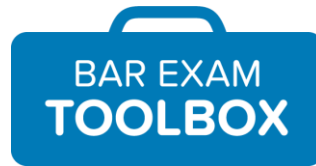
RESOURCES:

[I Failed](#)

[Podcast Episode 8: What Happens If You Fail the Bar Exam \(w/Ariel Salzer\)](#)

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

[Podcast Episode 60: Applying for Accommodations on the Bar Exam \(w/Elizabeth Knox\)](#)



[Podcast Episode 116: California Bar Exam Results Are Out! What's Next If You Didn't Pass?](#)

[Podcast Episode 127: Why People from Prestigious Law Schools Fail the Bar Exam](#)

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