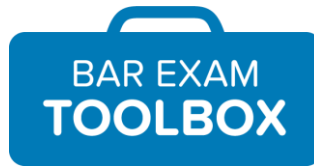


Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, as part of our "Quick Tips" series, we are focused on our parents, and will be talking about how to balance parenting, or really any life commitments, with the bar exam. Your Bar Exam Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's 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.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back! First off, you're probably here because you're going to take the bar exam at some point. Well, great news – you've come to the right place. But more specifically, you're here because not only are you taking the bar exam, but you're also a parent. Not a parent? I bet you still have some life responsibilities you must balance while studying. What about being a pet owner, a child helping their parents, a friend helping other friends who are struggling? If you have life commitments that are important and require you to thoughtfully balance your time – well, this episode is for you.

Lee Burgess: Parenting is really hard, and so is the bar exam. So you might be wondering, "How could I possibly do both at the same time?" Well, good news. So many parents have successfully studied for the bar, taken the bar and passed, all while caring for their kiddos. Some people like to refer to them as "super moms" or "super dads" or "super parents". But the truth is, parents have an innate ability to juggle many, many things at the same time. It's basically required for the position. While many who are not parents couldn't fathom simultaneously studying for the bar and being a parent, parents are indeed well-equipped to go through the bar and still assume their responsibilities as a parent. But being well-equipped doesn't make the task a walk in the park. Here are some tips on how you can set yourself up for success to balance parenting, or any other big life commitments, with the bar exam.

Lee Burgess: So first, no matter how old your child is, be sure to communicate to them about what you're doing. As any parent knows, kids are extremely aware. They know your schedule, they know when you're tired, they know when you're feeling stressed. When you begin bar prep, your routine will shift significantly as compared to what it regularly is. And this change will be felt, just as much for you as it will for your child. Before you start studying, talk with your child about



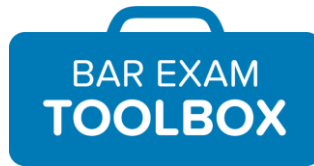
what the bar exam is and explain to them what you'll be doing for the next few months. Explain to them why this is important. This conversation will be different for kids of different age ranges, but whether they are two or 12, they will greatly appreciate knowing what you're going to be dedicating so much time to. Communicating will not only help them figure out ways to support you, but for you to be able to focus on studying. And remember that this does not have to be a one-time discussion. In fact, you should revisit and communicate with your child regularly throughout bar prep to give them ideas and check in on how you and they are doing. The more you're talking with them about the experience, the more they will feel comfortable and better understand this time when you're not regularly at home or present.

Lee Burgess:

Also, think about what you are teaching your child while you are modeling how to study or doing something hard. One of the ways we raise kids with grit and resilience is to model behavior and share stories. You can debrief with them: "Man, mommy was really struggling with X, Y, Z. But I have worked on it and approached it a few ways, and now I feel like I've got it." Or, "Oh dear, I'm having a hard time focusing. I am trying a few new things today to regain my focus and be more productive. I will let you know how it goes."

Lee Burgess:

Second, like any other bar taker, you'll want to have a great study schedule and routine for the duration of bar prep. Everyone has different needs, and each study schedule should be tailored for your needs, including how long you'll be studying, when and where you'll be studying, and what you'll be studying each day. However, for parents, be sure to include in your schedule intentional time to spend with your kids. What is intentional time? It is time you carve out during your daily study routine where you do nothing but spend time with your kid. No studying, no flashcards, no electronics. It is one-on-one time with your kiddo, and that's it. Preferably, you want to have at least 45 minutes to one hour of intentional time each day during studying, which can come in a variety of ways. For example, you may dedicate each lunch break for intentional time, or an hour in the evening before your child goes to bed. You can also explore mornings with your child, enjoying breakfast and possibly a bit of outdoor time before you begin studying. If 45 minutes to an hour seems like too much, just try for 20 minutes. For a child, 20 minutes feels like a long time. Also, make sure that you give them some ownership over that time if they are old enough. What do they want to do with you? Go for a walk? Ride bikes? Put together a new robot? That is what my kid was doing yesterday. Regardless of when or where you spend intentional time, remember that it is critically important – not just for your child, but for you. Carving out breaks helps you recharge from studying. And a big bonus of having a child is when you spend time with them, they have the magic power to remove you physically and mentally from bar study, which



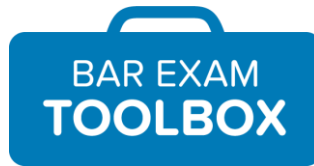
will give your brain a rest from the hundreds of essays and multiple-choice questions. So please, don't skip this. Also, think about how this is setting you up for future success, because you are finding patterns and rhythms that work for you that you can implement during workdays once you are a practicing lawyer.

Lee Burgess:

Our third tip is to establish your parenting as a positive mindset early on in your bar prep and maintain it throughout. If you are a parent, you've likely already heard it, either throughout law school, or as you begin to prepare for the bar exam: Some might ask, "How can you be a parent and also study the law?" Others may say, "Things are already so difficult, I don't know how you're doing it with a kid." Although these comments may be well-intentioned, it can also create a deficit mindset for the parent, who may begin having negative thoughts about their abilities to study for the bar exam. Parents, we know that parenting is hard! Parents who are studying for the bar also know that the bar exam is hard. But what some might not understand is that being a parent and studying for the bar can actually be seen as a positive thing. Why? Well, parenting provides you with the structured routine you need to get through bar prep successfully. Hear me out. When you have children, if you're not studying for the bar exam, you are almost 100% likely going to be focused on your kids. It is naturally what you do regularly anyway. So, while others may be wondering what they'll do in their free time away from bar study, for parents, there is no question as to what you'll be doing, so you won't be spending time thinking about what to do during your breaks or who you will spend time with. Your kids create more structure and routine for you in a way that allows you to stay focused. As difficult and challenging as parenting and bar study is, parenting can complement your study schedule by solidifying your time away from the bar exam, so there's no guesswork in terms of what you'll do during your time away from studying. And this is a blessing – treat it as such.

Lee Burgess:

Okay, tip number four: Identify and lean on the rings of support for your child. It is time to call in your village. It can be hard to ask for help, but this is your moment. You are going to be studying a lot, which means that even if you do have intentional time with your child, it is likely going to be significantly less than before. And your child's needs for time and attention aren't necessarily going to go away, particularly for the younger ones. In all likelihood, this means you'll need to identify and lean on those around you who are close with your kid, to offer them support while you are studying. These rings of support are going to be great for them, because they have an opportunity during your bar study to maybe spend more time with a favorite relative. But of course, it's also good for you, because a happy child means you can focus more of your attention on studying. Going into bar prep, you will likely already have a plan for who will be caring for and watching your child as you are studying for the bar

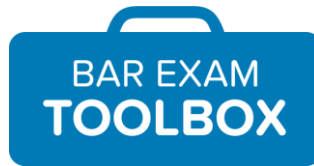


exam. But beyond a caretaker, remember that this support can be provided by a variety of people who love and care for your child. This includes, of course, the other parent of your child, their grandparents, and other family members or elective family members that can offer time to spend with your kid. Given that you will be studying for long durations and for weeks prior to the exam, it is important to think of those people close to you who can give your child the support and attention you otherwise would. This will ensure that you keep a good relationship with them, and it reduces pressure on you to feel like you always need to be there with them.

Lee Burgess: For our fifth tip, if your children are of appropriate age, study with your kids, both actively and in parallel. With active studying, your kids can take part in helping you study for the bar. Flashcards are an obvious option here, but you could even consider having them read a practice essay out loud to you and test your issue-spotting skills. There are lots of ways to directly engage your kids in the learning process, and doing so also gives them a front-and-center view of exactly what it is that you're studying and doing every single day. Give your children a chance to be involved – they'll better appreciate why you're gone so frequently. Beyond active engagement, you can also study in parallel with your kids. That is, while they are studying for class, doing homework or any number of other different activities, you can study alongside them. This makes it so that your child feels connected with you, even though you both are doing separate things, giving them more opportunities to be physically near you without needing to actually engage.

Lee Burgess: For parents with our youngest kiddos, six on the list for balancing parenting and the bar exam is to study while your kid sleeps. You may have heard that popular advice that you should sleep while your kid sleeps. This just replaces sleep, although remember that you should still be trying to get good sleep with studying. Granted, naps can fluctuate. Your child can wake up earlier than expected, and a number of other scenarios around naps may interrupt your study. If you are in a situation where you end up having to be the primary caretaker for the day, studying while your kid sleeps can help you stay caught up on your study assignments, so that the time isn't a total wash for making progress with bar study.

Lee Burgess: Tip number seven is plan, plan, plan, but also stay flexible. Children tend to dominate our schedule from the moment they are up until the moment they go to bed. If they're at home and not in school yet, they require planned activities throughout the day. If they are in school, there's their school schedule that we must adhere to. Often the challenge will be to figure out how you balance the intense schedule you already have with your child and add in significant time to

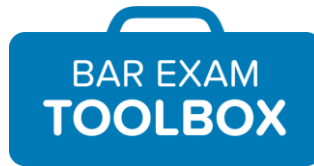


study for the bar exam. This is why planning as far in advance from the date of your bar exam to when you begin studying is so critical for your success. Planning out your study period will define for you and your child when you will be studying, and how their schedule fits into yours. This is key to balancing parenting with the bar exam, because your priority must be to get through the studying you need to get through in order to pass. And so, the more you know how to integrate your child's schedule into your study schedule, the less likely it will be that they would overlap, such that you would have to forego studying to tend to a schedule need for your child.

Lee Burgess: What might planning, planning, planning look like? Well, here's a suggestion, although there are many ways to do this: For each day and week of bar prep, plan out what you'll be doing, where you'll be studying, and for how long you will study, and take all of those questions and your child's study schedule onto it. What do they need? Where will they be? Who will they be with? Creating your schedule in partnership with your bar study schedule will create the greatest chance of getting through your practice materials as planned, with little to no interruption. At least, that is always the hope. Communicate with your child and others in your family what your schedule needs to be, and remind everyone frequently to stick to it. Planning out your bar study period is the best way to balance parenting with bar study. Don't forget this critical step at the beginning of bar prep. Also, create a kid-focused Google calendar, so that you can share with your involved village. Note who will help with the kids and when. It can make sure everyone is on the same page.

Lee Burgess: And yet, we can plan as much as we want, but it always seems that kids have a way to derail those plans. So, of course you must also be flexible – flexible with your schedule, yourself, and your kids. Flexibility doesn't always mean canceling your planned study day, but it might mean making adjustments where necessary. Can you move a practice test to a later time in the day if something comes up in the morning? How about shifting your scheduled afternoon practice to an off day? The point is that as much as we can plan ahead for how we want to approach our bar study period, parents know all too well that if there's anything that kids do well, it's take our plans and throw it in the trashcan. Just remember that the plans don't necessarily need to go in the trash, but can stretch and move into other parts of your study day or week.

Lee Burgess: Finally, studying for the bar can be mentally, emotionally, and yes, even physically exhausting. And in caring for a child, it can sometimes seem impossible to do both at the same time. So this last tip is really about you. Don't forget to check in with yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically, and make the time for self-care. The idea of taking care of yourself is quite common, and



many resources discuss this frequently. However, the best kind of self-care is the kind that you know will help you center yourself and rejuvenate you the most. Self-care doesn't always have to be time away from your child; it could actually be that dedicated time with your child. Self-care can also be a cup of coffee you need from a favorite coffee shop, or a pickup basketball game at the park with neighbors. Whatever it is that helps remind you of how big and beautiful the world is outside of the bar exam, make sure you take time to do that. Being at your best is critical to performing well on the bar exam, and self-care should be a regular routine activity that is embedded into your weekly schedule. As much as possible, avoid going weeks, or even more than a month without taking time for yourself.

Lee Burgess: As we wrap things up, I just want to say that if you're going into bar study as a parent, you already know that parenting is not easy. And if everything you've heard about the bar exam is true, you'll likely recognize that bar study will also not be easy. But remember that even if the journey ahead is going to be challenging, it can be done. You can do this! And when things get really tough, as they do for most, if not all bar takers, check in with some other people and allow others to help prop you up. As often as we think we can get through something by ourselves, it is always good to let others help however they can, so we can take the time to do the things we need to do to allow us to re-energize for another round of studying. And then repeat.

Lee Burgess: And with that, we're out of time! 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 would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at lee@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!

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[Private Bar Exam Tutoring](#)

[Podcast Episode 52: Avoiding Burnout While Studying for the Bar Exam](#)

[Time Management for the Bar](#)

[Tips for Surviving Bar Prep as a New Parent](#)

[Being a Parent During Bar Prep: The Ultimate Test in Multitasking](#)

[Bar Exam Tips: How Do You Recommend Studying While Balancing Family Responsibilities?](#)

[Five Tips for Balancing Bar Exam Prep with Work and Life Responsibilities](#)