

REFLECTION OF MY LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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My first year in law school reminded me of the following crucial fact of life: there are few weaknesses that a person cannot overcome to achieve a goal. My weakness, at least the most glaring when it came to law school, was my need to control my environment. I find comfort in stability. I prefer set schedules and to-do lists, and I plan out my years, months, weeks, days, and even hours. Planning gives me the illusion of control. I thought that good planning would sustain me through law school. It did not. No amount of planning, scheduling, or to-do lists would overcome the fact that I could not control my environment nor could I change it. I either had to adapt or fail. I came to law school expecting to learn critical thinking skills, the law, and of course, how to pass the bar exam. During my first year, my most important lessons were not about any of those things. The greatest lesson was about how to deal with the unexpected in order to adapt and thrive.

Heavyweight Champion Boxer, Mike Tyson once said, “Everybody’s got a plan until they get hit.” I got hit early in my first semester. I had carefully set a schedule for my family. Weekends would be free to spend with family and run errands. I would wake up at 5:00 a.m. on weekdays, exercise from 5:30-6:30 a.m., prepare lunches from 6:30-7:00 a.m., get dressed, sit down to breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and be out the door by 8:30 a.m. The afternoon schedule would be: back from school by 3:45 p.m., reading my assignments, driving to whatever afternoon activity the family had planned that day, helping with homework, making dinner, sitting down to dinner with the family, reading some more, and going off to bed by 10 p.m. That schedule lasted two days. By the third day, I realized that I would have to use my exercise time to finish my assignments because I could not complete them after school. The morning routine was chaos. We barely ever left the house on time and my afternoons were completely overtaken by my family obligations. I was lucky if I was in bed by 1:00 a.m. and could crawl out of bed by 6:30 a.m. I struggled with this routine for a few days until I quickly realized that the routine had to change or else I might flunk out of law school. Obviously, the schedule was not working. It was time for modification. Instead of yoga or my typical total body workout in the morning, I walked on the treadmill while reading cases. Rather than preparing breakfast and lunches in the morning, I prepared them the previous night. On the weekends, I split family time with reading. I have not completely thrown out the schedule, but I make small changes as needed.

Simultaneously with my battles at home, I was also struggling with another dilemma. This issue was in my classes. I am an introvert. I prefer to think and observe rather than participate. However, participation in law school is a substantial part of our grades. Participation in law school means: not just participation when called upon, but voluntary participation as well. Just the thought of raising my hand and speaking in class caused my heart to race. One professor would actually ask me repeatedly why I always looked so scared. My anxiety level was so high when I had to speak in class that my brain could not function properly. Although I knew the material well, often I could not process questions and my comments and answers came out unintelligible.

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For this problem, I sought advice from my professors and classmates. Since I was already prepared for class, I was told that practice would cure my fear. Of course, I did not want to practice something that I was terrified of doing, but when the alternative was a lower grade, I realized I had no choice. I am still nervous when I am called on in class, but I make a point of raising my hand: (1) so that I do not lose class participation points, and (2) so I am able to become more comfortable with speaking publicly. Again, I cannot change my nature, but I was able to adapt.

Albert Einstein said, “The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.”¹ I am proud to say that, as I build on my intelligence, my ability to change grows as well. Throughout my first year in law school, I was challenged to make changes that would allow me to adapt to my new environment. Although, I did not and could not completely change my nature, I was able to overcome my need for control just enough so that it did not paralyze me.

¹ *Albert Einstein*, GOODREADS, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/85475-the-measure-of-intelligence-is-the-ability-to-change> (last visited 12-12-2018).