

**A REFLECTION OF MY LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

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When I received my acceptance letter to the Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center, my heart slowed in my chest. I had been waiting my entire life for this moment, and now that it was here, I could hardly believe that I was going to attend law school.

I immediately signed up for a law school preparation course and read blog posts about how to survive the first day of law school. I bought highlighters in every color and pens to match. The summer before my first semester, I listened to videos explaining the basis of the American Legal System as I rolled my eyes. It seemed like a review of High School Advanced Placement History and American Government classes which did not fit my perception of what law school would be like. I thought surely, students who attend law school would at least know the basic system of government. Reviewing this seemed pointless and childish in my mind.

During orientation, the professors that met with us emphasized that law school would be unlike any other schooling that we had received. The workload would be greater than at other levels of education and there was more reading, research, and writing than we could fathom from our new perch on the law school ledge. The experience would be harder than the other levels of higher education. It was becoming clear to me that law school could eat you alive if you did not spend every minute of every day preparing. My classmates and I attended mini-seminars on everything from Managing Your Law School Debt and What Not to Wear to Court to How to Ask for Help and Using Mindfulness to Manage Law School Stress. There seemed to be so much to keep up with, and I began to feel compelled to be perfect.

I felt a need to excel in my courses and participate in extracurricular activities, while making a good network of connections at every turn. This was the only way to ensure success in the field when looking for postgraduate employment. Our professors reminded us during classwork review sessions that without our full efforts and attentions we might fail.

Throughout my first year, I discovered that law school is indeed, different from other institutions of higher education and that it does take a lot of effort to succeed in law school. However, the source of that work does not come entirely from the textbooks or casebooks that professors assign. The work comes from learning a new way of studying and preparing for class. While there is a wealth of resources for incoming 1Ls on how to succeed in law school, each person must decide what methods work best. One of the most important things I learned my first year was not to be afraid of trying a method that did not come recommended by a more seasoned law student or professor. I also learned that it is equally important to stop using a method of studying that was recommended if that method is not working for you. There are many ways to succeed in law school and no two ways look the same. Having a good support system is very important. No matter how independent and self-sufficient one might feel, without someone to vent to, or someone to turn to when the work seems utterly overwhelming, this experience can be physically and mentally exhausting. Without a good support system, it can seem like there is no other choice but to leave the institution and try again later, or even not at all.

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Law school is hard because it requires one to learn new academic material while relearning how to present oneself and one's ideas in ways that are new and unfamiliar. At times, it can seem like a daunting task to master both legal etiquette, legal material, and networking while balancing usual day to day tasks that are necessary to live independently. However, it is possible to both master what is necessary and thrive.

The recipe for me was to take law school one day and one class at a time, and rely on a good support system, while being open to change. My support system has reminded me time and time again that I have the skills necessary to complete my degree and succeed in the field, and to take time to reset and relax. My support system has also cried with me about the seeming injustice of it all. The skills I learned my first year of law school will carry my well into the later years of my career.