

Tips and Tricks to Survive Law School, and Keep Your Soul: Some Advice From Seasoned NLG Law Students

- ❖ Ignore the noise. Other (usually conservative) students often try to compete and play mind games with what they view as their competition. However, remember why you're in law school. If your goal is to help others and effectuate some sort of positive change in the world, you don't need to pay attention to those corporate-driven, overly competitive colleagues.
- ❖ Be as involved in outside activities as possible. If there is a lunch time panel or something that draws you in based on your interests, attend! It will help to keep you sane and feed your social justice interests.
- ❖ Set boundaries. This might be one of the first times you have to say to those you love and trust that you will be somewhat unavailable during extremely busy periods. It is important that you not feel too guilty or pressured into ignoring your work to please your friends and family. Law school is tough, especially in the first year, so ask everyone to be understanding and give you some space.
- ❖ Keep active! One of the best things I did was keeping in touch with student organizations that interested me. It helped keep me sane throughout the first year which is largely devoid of discussions essential to those of us more interested in critical legal thought. (If you join a student group where you can meet 2L's and 3L's who had your professors, they can help you with outlines and give you advice about the final, etc.)
- ❖ Network! It's critical, for oh so many reasons. It helps you begin building your own support community and also can create some possible future employment opportunities.
- ❖ Remember why you came to law school. Never lose sight of the kind of law you wanted to practice, the people you wanted to help, or the change you wanted to affect. School can be very myopic and conservatizing. Keep your eye on the ball.
- ❖ Participate in the alumni mentoring program (if your school has one). It is a good way to meet an attorney working in your field and can also lead to internship opportunities.
- ❖ Reach out to professors who teach classes that you are interested in, even if you haven't taken their class yet. Most professors (especially ones who teach more focused electives) are more than willing to point you in the direction of opportunities that are available at your school for that specific field.
- ❖ Don't forget your life while in law school. Outside support and interests will help keep you grounded and well rounded. Go see a movie, get a drink, take a nap, read a book, etc. You will be a happier person for it.
- ❖ Find a way to cope. Despite good advice you heed and the best time management practices you master, you will become overwhelmed. When that happens, allow yourself to deal in the way that best serves you: cry, dance, laugh, watch stupid youtube videos, read a comic, eat a piece of chocolate. Release, relax and move on.
- ❖ Remain confident. Law school teaches you to question everything, from proper comma placement to nuanced meaning behind court opinions. This tends to lead to you questioning yourself. Remember that you had a skill set, talents and abilities before law school, and those will remain after law school. Try to find an activity that reaffirms your non-legal abilities (web design, translating, yoga instruction, etc.) and builds your confidence that will spill over into your law school experience.
- ❖ Remember that law school is designed to stress you out, so be intentional about avoiding the things about school that stress you out the most. In other words, choose your surroundings - whether its people, professors, study locations, living locations, or just where you decide to have a smoke break.
- ❖ Maximize your time by studying in the car with cds, on work breaks, and on the train. Wasting time during the week takes time away from friends and family on the weekend.
- ❖ No matter how difficult law school can get, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. There is a very competitive and taxing environment for workers in America. Being a lawyer offers an opportunity to find a rewarding job, respect in society, and a middle class life. That's becoming less and less common nowadays, even for college graduates.
- ❖ Remember: there are only 24 hours in a day. As sure as the sun sets, the sun will rise again. If things become overwhelming, start refreshed in the morning.