

Intro: Welcome to the Extra Mile Podcast for Bar Exam Takers! There are no traffic jams along the extra mile when you're studying for your bar exam! And, now, your host: Jackson Mumey, owner of the Celebration Bar Review!

Jackson Mumey: Well, hey, everybody. Welcome to the Extra Mile Podcast for Bar Exam Takers. This is episode 54, and I am Jackson Mumey. And happy new year to you. This episode is scheduled to come out right on New Year's Eve, and, boy, what a year it's been in 2015 and the bar exam, pretty tough I think for most people. Certainly, across the board, a tough year in terms of bar pass rates and a lot of things going on. Looking forward to 2016 and the exams coming up and a lot of changes I think starting to happen in the legal industry and in legal education. We're going to try and keep track and stay on top of those as we go forward into the new year.

I thought that, today, what I'd do, because it is New Year's, and, obviously for many people, New Year's is a time to set some new resolutions. I wanted to share with you 10 resolutions that I think you could choose from and use if you're studying for the bar exam in 2016 or beyond, and I wanted to just kind of work through those, just kind of go up from number 10 up to number 1 and share with you a couple of thoughts about that.

Before I jump into that, I just want to invite you, if you've not been subscribing to our podcasts, then you can do that. You can go to iTunes and subscribe to the Extra Mile Podcast. You can also go to our website at celebrationbarreview.com, click on the Podcast link, and you'll find show notes for all of our episodes as well as all of the past episodes. You can catch up, and you can subscribe there as well.

And I also wanted to invite each and every one of you, if you've not yet been through our master class called "How to Make the Next Bar Exam Your Last Bar Exam," this is a 90 minute course on the 4 steps that passing bar takers have to follow. It's been extremely well-received. We've offered it for some time now. And, if you've not yet signed up for your free seat, we invite you to do that. Just go to our website at celebrationbarreview.com. You'll see a button there on the homepage that says "Claim Your Free Seat." Just click on that and register. It's a 90 minute class, there's no charge, and I think you'll find it invaluable, so I invite you to do that.

Well, let's just jump right in, dive in here, to look at our 10 resolutions for the new year when it comes to the bar exams, and these are 10 things that I think a bar taker need or ought to resolve to do. We'll put it into the show notes as a list for you as well, but here we go.

Number 10 is a big one actually, even though it's at the bottom of the list, but I would resolve in the new year to strive for continuous improvement in my studies. I often share with students that it's easy to get caught up in outcomes and not think about process. If you're taking the bar exam in 2016 or beyond, your focus should be to continuously improve, to make sure that every essay

you write is better than the last one or performance test or set of multiple choice questions. You don't have to be perfect or even passing, certainly not right now if you're taking the February exam, and definitely not right now if you're taking the July exam, but you do need to be moving towards continuous improvement, and I think resolving that everything you do is quality work, that it's designed to help you improve your skillset is a great first resolution or resolution number 10.

We're moving up the list: resolution number 9. Resolve to set aside daily time for exercise and for rest. I can't emphasize enough how important it is that you stay balanced as you study for the bar exam. Now, if you've been a long-time listener of the podcast or my YouTube videos, you know that I believe very strongly that daily exercise followed by a period of study is the most effective way to get value out of the studies that you do.

Now, if you're like me and you're not really a gym rat, what does daily exercise mean? Well, for me, it's as simple as just taking a walk for 30 minutes or so every day. That would be a great thing to do, or getting out and riding your bike, or, if you're a swimmer, doing some swimming. If you like going to the gym, that's great. Go to the gym and do that. Now, I've had some people over the years that have said, "Well, I exercised for 2 hours, and then I was just too tired to study." Whoa, we're not talking about being an Olympic athlete here. We're talking about enough exercise to get your blood flowing, get your brain working, and then to get in and study. We've talked about this before, but there is a correlation, a pretty strong scientific correlation between the benefits of exercise and the benefits of good study, so I definitely think you should exercise on a daily, regular basis in some form.

But, along with that, I said it's to set aside daily time also for rest. I think that, in any given day, it's important to rest physically and rest mentally, and too often what happens is we get caught up in all of the things we have to do, and we just go from one event to another to another to another. It's perfectly okay to take some time to rest and relax, definitely to make sure that you sleep well at night. When people tell me that they're only getting 4 or 5 hours of sleep on a regular basis before the bar exam, that's not a good sign. I love using my Jawbone Up or my Fitbit tracker to tell me what my sleep is like. It's a great way to track it and just know that I'm getting 7 or 8 hours of good quality sleep, and I think that that's important, equally as important, as the exercise that you get. That's our number 9 resolution: to set aside daily time for exercise and rest.

Number 8 on the list is that I think on a daily basis you resolve to meditate, to pray, and to laugh. I love meditation. Coming up later this month, we're going to be doing an interview with the president and founder of Centerpoint Research Institute, Bill Harris, and I'm really excited about this. I mean this guy is like the guy. He's like the guru of meditation, guru maybe not actually the right word in this context, but, in any event, he is really one of the leaders in the field. We're going to dive into meditation. I have done it for a number of years. I love it. I

think it's great. I love binaural beats kind of meditation, where you just put on the headset and listen to him, but, if you like meditating where you're literally focused on your breathing and chanting, that's great. Do something, but get some way in which you get outside yourself for a little while.

In the same vein, I think prayer is clearly important. As a believer, I think that prayer is probably the most important piece, but I do think that you need to set time aside for prayer, for study of Scripture if you are a believer, in order to, again, have perspective, balance, to realize that there's a bigger world than you and the bar exam, and I don't think anything helps as much in doing that perhaps sometimes as that time set aside for daily prayer.

And then I said to laugh, because I think very often what happens is we become very sour, very angry, it's easy to become bitter and frustrated in the bar exam. Those are all really bad words, and we lose our capacity to laugh and enjoy what's going on around us. And so I really would encourage you to resolve to laugh more, to find the humor in all of this. I try at least in our bar review to break it up with a little bit of humor from time to time. You may not like my sense of humor, but the point is that I don't think it has to be quite as serious and quite as deadly dull as we sometimes make it out to be. So that's our number 8 resolution: meditate, pray, and laugh.

Number 7 is that we resolve to be open to new ideas and information. I've talked about this in other contexts, but, if you're shut down, if you're closed to learning new things, if you're closed to the idea of new ways of studying, new ways of learning, if you're closed to the idea of just learning anything, this is going to be a long, painful, and probably unproductive process for you. You want to resolve that you'll be open to this, that the different ways of studying, different ways of learning, different ways of writing, all of these things are exciting, and you should be open and enthusiastic about that. And, by being open, by resolving to be open, you're really inviting into your life new information, new approaches, and new ways to be successful, so I love that as a resolution.

Number 6 would be to resolve to be patient with others and yourself. Bar takers are notoriously jumpy. I describe them sometimes as thoroughbreds. They can snap at their loved ones. I can not tell you how often I hear particularly from fiancées of bar takers who say, "I can't believe the person I'm engaged to be married to, they've just turned into a monster in this process." Part of what happens is that the bar taker gets frustrated. They're frustrated with themselves, frustrated with the process, but they take it out on everyone around them, and that can be really a dangerous and a bad habit. It can be something that really causes irreparable wounds in those around you.

You need to resolve to be patient with others. They don't know what you're going through as a bar taker. They may not understand it. They can emphasize, but that's all they can do, and they can't be the ones to take the exam, so you

need to be patient with them. But, in the same way, you need to be patient with yourself. This is a process. It's learning and growing. It's got typically some peaks and valleys, some missteps along the way, some things that are harder than others, and, if you're impatient with yourself, it's difficult to learn and to grow. Then you just simply become angry and frustrated, and you shut down the ability to really grow and learn. So I think resolving to be patient with yourself is an important step in this process.

Number 5 in our resolutions list is to learn something new in every study session. This is kind of like number 7 about being open to new ideas, but, more specifically, I think if you resolve that, in every study session, you're going to really develop a new skill, learn something new, learn a new piece of information, get a new insight. If you approach the study that way rather than, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I've got to sit through another 3 hour lecture," "I've got to do this number of pages of reading," or "I've got to answer these stupid questions or write this silly essay," or whatever it might be, you're really not getting the full value of the process of learning. But, if you approach it as though there's something new to be learned, something to be gained, something to get you closer to your goal, then I think you approach the study with a very different mentality, and you'll find it's much more valuable for you.

Resolution number 4 is to discover your strengths and then use them as a springboard. Resolve to discover your strengths in this process and then use those strengths as a springboard. I've talked in our master class about the fact that people often view all of the reasons why they can't do things and they look at their problems and their weaknesses. They don't really build on their strengths. And the reality is that you have a lot of strengths.

If you're in a position to take the bar exam, it means that you've done well enough to get through high school and college, to get in and take the LSAT, and get into law school, and graduate from law school. Whether it was here or in another country, you did all of that. Perhaps you've been practicing law. Still represents that you had enough strengths to be in a position to go and take the exam, and, frankly, if you've been taking it repeatedly, there's a strike there of persistence as well.

I think that, when you discover your strengths, as a student, as an individual, as a potential lawyer, or a current lawyer, and then you use those strengths and you build on the things that you're good at instead of always focusing on weaknesses and problems, I think that the difference in that focus and attitude and structure will make a huge difference. In fact, I've seen it over and over and over again. When people stop focusing on their weaknesses and start focusing on what they do well and doing more of those things, they see much greater success, and that's why I use the language of a springboard. It literally catapults you up into greater success.

So, if you don't know what your strengths are, you ought to sit down and really try to make a list of the things that you think you're good at. Do some inventory. Do some talent inventory to see what your strengths are. And, if you're still not sure, ask the people around you. Ask your teachers. Ask your family. Ask your friends. Ask your coworkers. But, in some way, discover your strengths and then use them.

Well, now we're down to what I think of as the top 3 resolutions for the new year for the bar exam. Here's number 3: resolve to picture yourself succeeding on the exam. I'll say it again: resolve to picture yourself succeeding on the exam. Too often, I work with bar students who actually have great and vivid and highly detailed pictures, but the pictures are a failure. The pictures are what's going to happen when they fail and what the results are going to be and the parade of horrors as we call it that's going to occur. This is precisely the wrong thing to paint into your subconscious and into your mind. In our master class, I spent a lot of time talking about being in a trance, but this is one of the trances that I think people get into. They picture themselves not succeeding rather than succeeding.

So, how do you picture yourself succeeding on the exam? Well, I love the use of something called a vision board, which is where you take pictures and words you put up on this board in a place where you can see it all the time, visual representations of your success. Sometimes, that's a letter from the bar examiner saying you've succeeded, and here's the score you've got. Maybe it's a picture of you and your new law office. Maybe it's a picture of your business card as a lawyer. Maybe it's a picture of you really as you perceive yourself as a member of the bar. It can also be pictures and words about your family and the people that will benefit when you become a member of the bar. In other words, you start picturing, visualizing, success.

When you start visualizing and thinking and focusing on success rather than failure, you're drawn to that success. But, if you think about and focus and fixate on failure, you're drawn to that failure just as inevitably. And I've talked about that a lot in a lot of different contexts, and I won't belabor the point today. I just want to say that it's important that you resolve to continuously picture yourself being successful in this exam if you're going to be, in fact, successful.

Resolution number 2 is kind of a summary of some of what I've already said, but I think it's important, and I've put it in the number 2 spot for that reason. It is that you resolve to remain excited and enthusiastic throughout the study process. Resolve to remain excited and enthusiastic throughout the study process. Look, I get it. It's hard. It's long. It's frustrating. It's difficult. But the people that do well on the exam almost inevitably, from my 25+ years of experience now, are the ones who are excited and enthusiastic when they begin and they remain that way throughout the process.

They have their moments of frustration and their moments of discouragement, but they don't let those remain for very long, if at all, and they continually remain excited and enthusiastic about what they're learning, how they're growing, how they're developing, what the possibilities for them, what it's going to be like to be a member of the bar, and that excitement and enthusiasm permeates everything they do. They write essays and performance tests with much more energy. They dig into their studies with a lot more enthusiasm. They come to the conferences with me much more open and ready to receive information and much less defensive. In other words, by setting a tone of excitement and enthusiasm, it really seems to lift everything around them as well as themselves and their study.

If you can't honestly say that you're excited and enthusiastic, at least about the study process, I would invite you to go back and re-evaluate because, while it's not an enjoyable process to go through the bar exam, it is an opportunity to discover some really wonderful things about the law. It's a great opportunity to discover things about yourself. It's an opportunity to improve or enhance or refine skills that you developed maybe years ago or maybe just recently in law school. If you approach it that way, you're really changing your entire mental outlook around the exam. That's, I think, well worth it for you, and it leads to a better result.

Well, that takes us to our final resolution for the new year for the bar exam, number 1 on my list of resolutions, and it's resolve to do your best on the exam by demonstrating your skills, your knowledge, and your temperament to be a lawyer. I'll say it again: resolve to do your best on the exam by demonstrating your skills, knowledge, and temperament to be a lawyer.

I don't say to people, "Resolve to pass the bar," because it's not necessarily within your control. All you can do is your very best on the exam, and then it's up to the graders and the examiners to decide if that's good enough. In my experience, if you do your best, it is good enough because your best was good enough to get you into law school and to give you and put you in a position to take the bar. But, really, my point with this resolution is that, if you resolve to do the best you can do and that the way that you're going to do that is that, during the bar exam, you will demonstrate your skills, your knowledge, and your temperament, then you're really showing the best that you've got.

Now, notice what I'm not saying: I'm not saying that you demonstrate your ability to memorize or your ability to recite rules or your ability to have a lot of mnemonics and checklists and outlines in front of you. It is not your ability to bluster and bluff your way through. It is not demonstrating your ability to throw a temper tantrum and to be obnoxious and boorish. It's not demonstrating complete and utter emotional lack of maturity. None of those things obviously. It's really quite the opposite. If you demonstrate the skills that you've acquired during your study, if you demonstrate the knowledge that you've acquired as you study for this exam, and if you demonstrate the temperament that you've

acquired through the study, then you're really doing what the bar examiners are looking for, and that leads to successful results.

And so my suggestion for each of you is that you resolve to control the things you can control and give up the rest of it. Give up the things that are beyond your control. I guess I'd go back to number 8: meditate, pray, and laugh. Give up those things that you can't control. But, overall, resolve that you will use the bar exam as an opportunity to demonstrate skills, knowledge, and temperament. When you do that, then you're going to have success on the exam.

Well, those are my list of 10 resolutions. You've probably got some of your own, and I'd love to hear them. Feel free to email me or put them in the comments from the show notes, love to hear the things that you've got, and maybe we'll do a little bit more on some of these resolutions throughout the year and see how they're going and see how people are doing with them. I do invite you to really think seriously about this part of the process. I know that my resolutions didn't include a single resolve to learn the rules against perpetuities kind of statement. Along the way, you'll have to do those things, but that's not what you resolve to do, so I hope you'll take the bigger picture and really take these as aspirational opportunities for you to resolve to really do the very best you can do and then to demonstrate those skills when it comes time for the bar exam.

I wish you a wonderful 2016, looking forward to all that we've got coming up on the podcast and with our bar exam and bar review courses at Celebration Bar Review and for our students, and I look forward to hearing from you. Best of wishes for this upcoming new year. Thanks.

Well, that wraps up today's episode. Thanks so much for listening. If you'd like to be part of our Extra Mile for Bar Exam Takers private Facebook group, just check the show notes. You'll find a link in which you can request an invitation, and we'll see you along the extra mile.

Intro:

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