Passing the Bar: A Quick Reference Guide For Today’s Law Student
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CALI eLangdell® Press

For Loved Ones

This chapter is for those of you who love someone who is studying for the bar. No one is their best self when they are studying for the bar. Your loved one will need space and time to study. They will also probably need you to cut them some slack with the everyday chores of life.

It is best if you can leave your bar taker out of family problems and decisions as much as possible. They need their full attention to be centered on the bar exam, and that focus can easily stray. Most decisions can wait. Most problems can be taken care of without them. Many bar takers are central figures in their family – the one that people go to for support and advice. Try to insulate them from this role as much as possible during the bar study period.

The best thing you can do for your loved one is to leave them alone, and periodically do something nice for them. Motivation, affirmation, and encouragement are key to the bar study process. Additionally, the value of providing tangible assistance cannot be overestimated – making meals they can freeze, going grocery shopping, doing laundry, etc. Anything you can take off of their plate will be very helpful.

Your bar studier will also need to be regularly reminded that they are smart and capable. Simple things like leaving Post-it Notes with encouraging phrases like "You Can Do It!" around their living and studying spaces can go a long way. Flowers, chocolates, and massages won’t hurt either.

Bar studiers do not make the best roommates. They are stressed out, irritable, and irrational. On the plus side, they won't be throwing loud parties or having lots of guests over.

What Your Bar Studier is Going Through

It is important to understand that studying for the bar exam is an all-consuming endeavor. You may think that your loved one is exaggerating about how much time they need to devote to studying, but they aren't. Bar study requires a level of lengthy focused attention unlike most other tasks. They really do need to eliminate all distractions (and everything is a distraction). They also won't be able to do extra chores, and may not end up having time to do some of the chores they typically take on.

Remember that this is just a short period of time – 2.5 months. There are a lot of ups and downs in bar study, as one set of practice questions may go well, and the next one may feel like a disaster. Your loved one may take those emotional ups and downs out on you. They don’t mean to. Once they get through it, they will return to their charming, helpful selves.

A Few Tips For A Happy Home

1. Communicate with your bar studier about their needs, and make yours clear as well. Really listen to them. Try to be accommodating. Set up ground rules and boundaries. Remember that it is not forever. If you help them get through this period, your relationship will be stronger than ever.
2. Don't get on their case if everything is not as clean and tidy as it usually is. Definitely don't make them clean up after you. They don't have time for that. They will barely have time to clean up after themselves and do their own laundry.
3. Be as quiet as you can. Music, TV, and even conversations can seem louder to a bar studier than they actually are, when they are trying to focus on studying. Try to respect their need for quiet, and work out rules and boundaries with them in advance. It is especially important not to interrupt their sleep so that they can get enough rest to carry them through long days of studying.
4. Be encouraging. Little notes with positive affirmations and motivational sayings mean a tremendous amount. It is really nice to know someone believes in you when you are struggling with a difficult task that takes a toll on your confidence.
5. Give them space, but also let them know you’re there. Most of the time bar studiers will want space to do what they need to do. It is a time when they need to be very focused and selfish. But, they also need breaks, and sometimes someone to vent to, so let them know you’re there if they want to talk or hang out.

Don’t worry, once they get past the bar exam, they will return to their lovable selves. They are under a lot of pressure now, but eventually that pressure releases. They will be forever grateful for the love and support you showed them during this time.

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