

## **Transcription for: "01PROOF YA Roundtable.mp3" (Uploaded File) (New Transcription)**

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On this throwback episode of ChronicxTwenties, we revisit a roundtable from December 2023. Cassie Mummert, Darcy Gott, Ethan McGrew, Jesse McCall, Lance McCall, and Victoria Medl discuss how they navigate the stress of college, postgraduate studies, and mental wellness with primary immunodeficiency. In memory of Ethan McGrew.

**Darcy Gott:** I had my IVIG the day before one of my finals, and it was the one final that was closed book. My nurse my nurse is like you have you have high blood pressure right now and like I can physically see the stress like, radiating off of you, but you need to calm down. But, yeah, it's And then in the first year of law school too, they always tell you it's like like the worst year of law school because it's like a weed out year.

Like, they throw you into all these difficult courses. Like, you don't have any experience in this type of class. You know, you get cold called on the readings. You actually have to do all of the readings including the footnotes to to pass. Everybody else is, like, super competitive or can be super competitive, and they're very strict about their rules.

And, you know, you're also trying to balance, like, work life. I mean, there's there's so much work that goes into the first year of law school. That we actually had to, like, sign a document saying that we wouldn't have a job during our first year unless we, like, needed one to survive. So, yeah, that's that's how finals went for me. I will tell you though there were some... There are some interesting questions on my finals.

I think the professors have a lot of fun coming up with these, like, random situations for us to write thousands of words on. So

**Ethan McGrew:** You have to keep yourself amused if I when if I'm gonna be a college professor, I'm totally doing stuff like that.

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. I mean, I can't I can't, like, say exactly what was on the final, but I could see I could imagine some of my professors writing this and laughing to themselves and being, like, I guarantee you at least a couple of students are gonna laugh when they see this question.

**Jesse McCall:** Or cry. One of the two. You know?

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ethan McGrew:** A good cry laugh. It's always nice.

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. The other thing too that's weird is that grading is completely confidential. So the professors, like, have no idea who you are when they're grading the final. You just

have, like, a number and you put your number on all of your exams. They're not even allowed on campus when you take your exams.

So you're not allowed to, like, email them at all about anything specific to your final And I don't even think they're allowed to respond to you until after they graded your finals, so they keep every it's just to maintain, like, an unbiased environment they don't want to risk the personal feelings of the professors affecting how they grade your final. So that's why they keep everything as confidential as possible.

**Jesse McCall:** So what you're telling me is Legally Blonde is not accurate.

**Darcy Gott:** No, it is not.

**Lance McCall:** Dang it.

**Darcy Gott:** Well, I don't know. Maybe there are other law schools that do nonconfidential grading. There are some classes, like my writing class was nonconfidential, but my other three classes, like, I they have very strict rules. You were not allowed to put your name on anything really until the final.

**Jesse McCall:** Interesting. And you have how many finals? Two?

**Darcy Gott:** Three? I have three.

**Jesse McCall:** That's right. Yep. But you're done. Right? You're done until next semester?

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. And then I get to start it all over again.

**Lance McCall:** Yay.

**Darcy Gott:** Yay.

**Lance McCall:** We...

**Ethan McGrew:** I already got my grades in last week, the sixth somehow. And I somehow have a ninety eight. I don't understand.

**Ethan McGrew:** I only missed two on the final. The final was thirty percent of my grade and had thirty bonus points. The only thing I can think of is the final could go over a hundred maybe. I don't know. But finals week, I was in the hospital or whatever.

And if it wasn't for my accommodations, and, like, my teacher being letting me take the final, like, two days late and turn in a bunch of late work because before I had a test I had missed, which was ten percent of my grade, a bunch of other things I had missed, and the final I had missed, I had like a fifty eight. So it was, like, that wouldn't be good. But luckily, I got all that done. It was just really important to keep my, like, teacher updated with yeah. So I know I've already asked for a lot of extensions this semester.

I've had two eye surgeries, and now I've been in the hospital. But, like, can I please have an extra two days? And she was very nice and let me have the extended time. So that's done for. So that's good.

I'm very happy about that. I was like, never I saw the grade get posted, I was like, I hope this isn't a mistake. I kept checking back. And I kept checking back. And then the next day, it was still a ninety eight.

And I'm like, I mean, I'm not gonna message anyone. I don't know how this is happening, but I'll take it. I only was taking one class this semester because I knew I was gonna have a bunch of eye surgeries, and so I didn't wanna, like, overload myself. I know we only do halftime anyway, but I've been lucky enough to have a lot of very, very accommodating professors and everything. And I go to, like, a community college and everything here locally.

And so they basically just took my five zero four and IEP from I guess middle school because I didn't exactly go to high school. But they just took my old IEP in five zero four and gave me almost all of the same accommodations. Wherever it was, I get double time on test if I need or I get extended due dates for my health. The double time I'll test it because I'm also very dyslexic. But the extended due dates has come extremely in handy with all of the different health challenges, whether if it's traveling for doctors, one of my first semesters, I had a real big paper that I had to write and then present in front of the class. But I had to go to Arizona to see my autonomic neurologist. And luckily, they let me present my paper on a different day. Because, basically, it was a argument of reasoning in class, and there were twelve topics. And you got assigned We try to write a paper on all of the twelve topics, but one of the paper was the big one that you had to present and was, like, way bigger than the others. And so, of course, that's the week I'm gonna have to go to Arizona on.

But they let me present on a different day. Thanks to my accommodation and stuff like that. It was really important, like, getting to know the disability office and I don't know if I don't they may have changed it to student services. One of the two I don't remember exactly what it's called nowadays. Since I've been there for so long.

But if it if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be I wouldn't have a A GPA, like I have, but three point eight or whatever. It's purely because of the accommodations, which is good. Because it's, like, with all the health problems that all of us have, we all require different assistance to, like, be able to do, like, the basics that everybody else can just because of normal people don't have to go to the doctor, like, ever or manage their infusions Like like Darcy said, doing her IVIG the day before finals, that would kick my butt. I could not do that, especially a closed book one. I would have not done well to say the least.

I have pretty severe day after post IVIG hangovers, let's say the least, usually. I plan on being down for a day and a half, two days, And if it's a bad one, then three. And my little

sister, she gets IVIG. She's only been on it for a year or two now. And she has three solid days of just real bad hangovers from it.

**Darcy Gott:** Jesse, Vicky, you guys are currently going through finals. Right? How has that been?

**Victoria Medl:** Tiring. I'm very tired. It's also -- I've also been off of my infusions since May. So I'm struggling to say the least. Doing everything on top of school, being an adult, doing adult things and taking care of my grandmother.

I'm incredibly privileged to do everything that I do, but at the end of the day, it does exhaust me quite a lot. And I'm also -- I have around four finals and a final paper due this week and next week. So I am a big ball of stress right now. So for me, it's definitely my my... my mental health definitely has a physical manifestation.

I've had a couple of days throughout the semester where I've had really, really bad pain flares from fibromyalgia. And I notice especially when I'm, like, doing a lot more physical activity or intensive labor or when I have exams that I'm stressed out. About then that's when my body suffers. So I think it's really important that you that I I never all of us take the time to take care of ourselves. Even just a little bit, if it's an extra hour of sleep or if doing something that we love, like, talking to each other, for example, it it really makes a world of difference.

**Ethan McGrew:** I know whenever I'm under tons of stress, my biggest thing is I don't sleep. My sleep goes way down. I wake up at like seven in the morning. Almost exactly right now for no reason. And that's just that's my biggest manifestation is how or my already poor sleep gets.

**Jesse McCall:** Yeah. For me doing exam. Sorry. Go ahead.

**Darcy Gott:** You go. I already spoke.

**Jesse McCall:** [laughing] So for me doing exams, I've taken the semester has been twelve credit hours, which isn't the most I've done in a semester, but it's the most I've done at FSU. I'm still new to getting used to FSU. I started FSU this past spring. So this is my second semester at FSU. It's weird.

Being without family or just really in general, being with family is my It's my happiness. It's my calmness. It's where I find the most rest where I find the most comfort. During spring semester, I'm like, I got to go home for spring break, and I got to go home for this that and the other. And it just seemed like there was several different breaks that I could take or a recurring semester, and I got to go home.

And it wasn't fun. But I didn't feel like I was without family. This semester has been absolute booty. Because I have been it's been Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I've had classes all day.

Like, so I'm on campus from usually nine AM until seven PM Monday, Wednesday, and then half of that on Friday. Tuesday, Thursdays is when I have to fit in time to do, like, homework and housework and try to keep up some semblance of a social life and also, like, try to make time with friends and family. It's been a lot. So I have not gotten to come home very much this past semester. So this semester has felt like it has literally lasted an eternity. I'm so glad the semester is so much open, but I have four exams before I can finish the semester and they are killing me. I was up from I was riding a study guide from eight o'clock to after midnight last night. I went to bed, woke up, and then from like nine o'clock until one thirty this afternoon. I finished writing that same study guide. So I worked eight hours on the study guide, for an exam that will last one and a half hours.

If I don't get a good grade on the exam, I'll still pass. I'll still pass, but I'm not gonna get an A, which means my GPA is going to drop a little bit, which isn't bad. In the grand scheme of things, it's not bad. But I have a four point zero GPA at FSU. I like like four point zero.

All my other classes, I have ace. I don't do good on this exam. I'm not gonna get an As. And now I'm having trouble with the professor because he's not wanting to accept some late work, which if he doesn't accept the late work, it's gonna put a B in that class. And I can't do anything about that class either.

So stress is just stressing all over. I think I'm going to finish the semester, go home, and I wish I could go home and sleep for an entire week or two or the entire break like a bear just hibernate. But because I'm not being able to go home for this semester, I have several doctor's appointments lined up. So my Christmas break is filled with doctor's appointments and minor medical procedures and everything and trying to plan for next semester in doing the same exact thing. Yeah.

That big ball of stress. It's it's me too. I don't -- I don't know. I Try and take a one day at a time. And then, Florida weather literally hates me. Yesterday, it was in the high eighties. Today, it's in the fifties. And it goes back and forth.

Everyone around me is getting sick, which means the guy with a weakened immune system is the only one not getting sick, which is a miracle in itself. Because I don't have time to get sick. So we are we are alive. We are pushing. Mental health is squeaking, squeaking, but just barely.

We're still here. That's what matters.

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. That's kinda how I felt when I was when I was in that semester. I'm very glad that at least can breathe a little bit, but definitely when I was in the in the weeds, it was it was tough to sift through it because, you know, yeah, we don't really have many assignments to turn in, but not the school, but the American Bar Association actually has, like, a requirement that you cannot miss more than five classes in a given course or else you cannot sit for the final, and that's just how it is. That's not something that's not school

regulation. That's like the American Bar Association saying that.

So I was very stressed out and also because of how much you have to learn. So I will say in law school you have this thing called an outline, which is, I guess, very similar to a study guide. It's essentially a condensed version of everything that you've learned. In the class. Now think we have to --

If there's like a very extreme medical emergency, basically, it's once you hit that five class mark the school will send you a message and say, you've reached your limit. You miss another day of class. You're not gonna sit for the final. Thus, you'll fail. And at that point is when you would have to send in, like, a doctor's note or something to basically explain like, hey, I was in the hospital for these days or, you know, I had a death in the family, so I couldn't.

And then they'd have to approve it based off of that. But I remember reading when I was going into law school that, like, accommodations for absences is not a thing. So I don't have any accommodations right now because of that. That was my only accommodation in college was not being penalized for absences when they relate to being sick and also dorming accommodations, but I live in a condo now, so that's not an issue either. But Yeah.

It was a lot because I would read anywhere between two and five hundred pages a week. That I would be cold called on. And there's eighty five other people in the room on the same thing. Oh, there's a lot of things that I could say about the association and things that need to change. But And then you have to think that this outline could be anywhere between, like, twenty and eighty pages per person.

And that's the condensed version of a class. So, yeah, when I was going through and trying to figure out, you know, what should I put on here? What shouldn't I put on here? And now I have to learn all of it, especially for the closed book exam. I had to learn all of that.

And it's not just learning the material. It's also knowing how to apply the material. So you can memorize it. Anybody could memorize the information that you're given. But in law school, it's all about how your brain works.

And being able to recognize when to apply, what you've learned. So how most, if not all, law school finals are structured is you have multiple choice, where they'll give you a little scenario, and you have to answer a multiple choice question based on that scenario where it's like, you know, I don't know, something like, what should their next step be? Or what do you think the court will say? Or if you were in this position, what would you do? What's your best move?

And then at the end, you'd have a fat essay question where they give you, like, three pages worth of a story. And you have about three to five questions that are in essay form about it. So you ask, you know, I don't know. So I mean, like, based on this part, you know, do you agree with what the court said? What would you do if you were on defense?

What would you do if you were the prosecution... things like that. So That also puts a lot of stress on it too. And it's a very crunched amount of time. It's a four hour exam. But your professors will come out and tell you, like, my my civil procedure professor is telling us, like, I don't expect you to finish the exam because it's so long in four hours.

So that was very stressful. I just had to keep reminding myself that I was there that I had to keep reminding myself that I was there for a reason and, like, I haven't messed up yet in class. So, you know, hope that I don't mess up now. Haven't done anything to to not prove myself. So yeah.

**Victoria Medl:** I think that's something we have to keep reminding ourselves about. We're almost there. We just gotta we have to keep pushing. We're gonna see our families. We're gonna be with people we love.

And we are in this career or in this journey for a reason. And I have no doubt that each and every one of us has a purpose in their set field. So we're gonna do great.

**Jesse McCall:** [singing] "We're all in this togeeetheeeeeerrrrr."

**Victoria Medl:** Yes. We just have to keep pushing. We're almost there, though.

**Cassie Mummert:** I think all of you guys are amazing. So I give you all props.

**Lance McCall:** I mean, I've not been I I didn't get to participate in the call selected due to recovery from final project that happened over the summer, which did take its own physical toll on my mental health. You definitely have physical manifestations for me when I turn into a stress anxiety ball. One of the big ones is that I tried to withdraw from people and then that back fight. You did read something after cut somebody off entirely out of my life. Because they weren't good for my mental health, which I should have done about a year ago.

**Jesse McCall:** There you go. My phone wasn't working. It would not unmute. Yes. That was a long time coming. I'm so very proud of you.

I know that was a hard decision. But sometimes your mental health or always your mental health has to come over other people's feelings. And as like... blunt as that sounds to a lot of people and it even sounds blunt to myself saying it. Your mental health was taking a giant toll because of someone else's feelings. So I'm very proud of you, Lance, for taking that leap and getting out from underneath that one person's feelings.

I know it was hard.

**Cassie Mummert:** I don't know if you guys have any, like, coping mechanisms for mental health or when you start getting anxious or depressed or, you know, start feeling any stress or you know, those crazy emotions. But one thing that my mom has actually helped me with when I was going through a really rough time when with my mental health and, like, I was

not in a good place at all. She actually we were only home from one of my more probably probably actually my most, like, hardest appointment mentally. And she asked me what my favorite color was and I said purple. And she asked me to say something that, like, what was purple.

And I said, a grape, but it was, like, a two and a half hour drive home. And so this whole conversation lasted over the whole drive. And basically, we came up with what is called the Grape Journal. And g, I had to come up with a positive word for every letter in grape. So, g is grateful, r is rewarding, a is attitude, p is positive, and then e is encouraging.

And every day, my mom, when we got home, she made me this... took a composition book, got some, like, scrapbook paper, that was purple, put it on the front. I glued it on and decorated it for me. It made me a bracelet out of different purple beads that's and then letters that spelled great. And every day I had to write at least three positive things that happened in a day, like, in that day. And they had to pertain to grateful rewarding attitude positive or encouraging.

And then for every I guess, like journal entry that I did for every positive thing I put in the journal. I got these purple, like, glass beads and I got to fill a vase. And then if I didn't have a good day, I would fill if I didn't have, like, three things to write about, then the two say, I only wrote one positive thing, then the two empty spaces or not positive things. Were just like a clear, like, glass bead or a different color. And so then over the course of a year, filling up the vase, you could see how many good days you had versus bad.

And so it was pretty cool, like, to see that, like, to see the growth over the year because as you, like, fill up your vase, you can see at least for me, I got to see that I was having more good days than bad. And I still actually use the journal to this day. I actually have it right here with me.

**Lance McCall:** I like that.

**Cassie Mummert:** Yeah. So I don't know if you guys have any fun, I guess, fun or... ways that you guys coped with mental health.

**Victoria Medl:** Alright. Let's go ahead.

**Lance McCall:** I was just gonna say, first, for me, I have a very hard time of studying when my boundaries are overstepped and cutting people off. That we take in a gap semester for me was extremely mentally challenging. Because I thrive on structure and working toward a goal, and I was not able to get everything done in time, nor was I clear to go back. So it left me with a lot of stress and anxiety of am I gonna be able to keep up with it come January when I start back? because I got out of that routine. And then also, like, I know for this course, there's a big behavioral concept form that goes through a lot of different mental health disorders. I know for me, I'm going to learn and then actually apply the knowledge in



front of a patient on a cycle is extremely terrifying and stressful, especially knowing that in the psych hospital that I'll be in, All the doors are locked, so you can't retreat.

And you become the sole person that cares for [the patient]. There's definitely dealing with that, but then dealing with the stress of everything else because we also have our normal clinical where we do, like, this week, of eight hour days at the hospital where we make no money and we are *heavily* scrutinized. And we have to deal with combative patients and patients that don't appreciate us being there and doing our assessments and finding that right language to deal with them, but also not taking that home. That is a big thing for me is taking the stress from school, and bringing my clinicals home with me, and then it spills over into my personal life and I'm involved with family and friends. Makes me definitely want to just disappear.

Into my room or there have been time and it's actually got to the point of self harm ideas from. And then though I have found it, it's very important to reach out to the friends that are actually healthy for me to help bring me back to I am in the right field. I am in the right thing. And doing what I need to do. Yes.

It sucks but it will get better. So that's kinda where I'm at. But I hope not have the minutes dressed as a school yet because that's gonna have to be learned when I get back into the actual test of school instead of the test of not being in school on top of me being the only one in my house. He now has to care for both my mom and grandmother. And grandmother has recently, after an injury, become one hundred percent reliant upon somebody else do do do you think in everything. So I also balance that. Hoping to take care of her. And then second week, mom cares for her, but then I often need to care for mom sometimes. So it's just the stress of life, school, and navigating is definitely hard and then add in with the PI, so that can cause some mental health.

And then, like, I know for me, I have like four days after IVIG that I am that the world don't. Feel like good. And those are oftentimes when I really recommend them because I don't have the energy to fight the thoughts. Because I already feel so bad and it's like, okay. I feel that now why am I even still doing it?

But then that's when I go back to friends and family. And my therapist and find healthy coping mechanisms and strategies to do it, which I know. I'm playing with my RC cars or crocheting or recently my family has had an abundance of vinyl projects that they need made. So It's very therapeutic when I sit down and I have to pick out a little pieces of vinyl from a cut design. So, yeah, that's kinda where I'm at.

**Ethan McGrew:** I love good repetitive tasks like that. In the past I've done stuff like coloring whenever it's real bad or I remember one night I was really bad. And and I was just doing repetitive tasks like that listening to a podcast and everything. But you were also talking

about having to jump back into school after taking gaps or whatever. I've had to drop two or three different semesters with a w over my course of college and everything like that. And one time it was a full year in a row, I think. And it's really at least for me, it wasn't as bad jumping back into it as as, like, it could seem. You really especially after that, once you learn what you like and you like for me was the biggest thing is, like, how I like to collect materials and stuff that I need to learn or getting everything set up on my computer certain way. So I can have it all like I need it for me to be able to intake the information. Once I figured that out, you don't really lose that type of base like understanding of, oh, this is how I have to study.

It can I it was hard getting back into the routine of, okay, I need to get up and I need to not waste the first hour and a half of the day? I need to get up, shower, eat or get up shower, watch my show, then do school type of thing. So whenever you do have to take gap gaps like that, it really does suck. And I've used to struggle a lot with, like, feeling bad about having to take a w or whatever. From a class, but I got better at accepting that.

Sometimes that's just the the cards you get dealt. You gotta you gotta drop the class if you don't wanna have to have a a w or you have to take the semester because as you said you had surgery.

**Cassie Mummert:** And another thing too, I think, is that we all need to remember to give ourselves grace, which is something that I have had to learn. And has been a really, like, tough pill for me to swallow is, like, remembering that I can't do it all and that's okay. Like or, like, yes, you're pushing yourself now. But in the end, it will pay off. Like, so go ahead and, like, Use your accommodations or take the breaks when you need because in the end, like, it's all gonna work out anyway.

And it's better to give yourself grace and, like, go at your own pace than try to push yourself too far.

**Victoria Medl:** That was a principle that I also learned pretty early on too, especially when I went to high school, I think my mindset shifted from, oh, you have to be a complete perfectionist in school to just do your best, do what you can. If you don't succeed, just keep trying. And especially when you're taking care of someone too -- a coping mechanism or a way I find I recharge. It's really really simple, but my grandma and I, we will usually watch shows together. So our favorites are, like, true crime and CSI Miami and all those, like, police detective sort of shows.

So what I will do is I'll usually lay in bed with her or sit beside her while she watches her show, and I'll do work. And it's a really simple task, but it kind of makes the work feel like it's not as taxing, just being with her. And I've taken more time out of my day. It's not just, you know, taking care of her and making sure that all of our tasks and chores are managed, but it's also making sure that she feels good mentally that she feels okay. It I what we do is we'll

play chess together whenever we have a moment.

We love watching movies. Sometimes we'll sit outside on the patio and just talk, and it's really the quality time that we spend together that really makes a huge difference. And I find that when I'm with her and not in caring for her, she feels a lot less alone. And a lot more independent and if that makes sense. Because she was the one that raised me basically because both of my parents were working.

So from a very very young age, I depended on her. And now it's the shift where she depends on me for almost everything. Taking her to appointments, also, you know, watching over my siblings too on on days where my parents -- both of my parents are working. So it's a lot to juggle, but through this experience, I really found that taking care of her and taking care of my family and spending time with them really fulfills me and gives me a sense of purpose. So it's it's really one, it's really a simple act, but just spending time with the people you love and the people you care about everyone makes a huge difference, I think, in taking away a level of stress.

**Ethan McGrew:** I wouldn't have been --

**Darcy Gott:** Yeah. For me, I'm glad in a way that when you get into law school, and you start, it's totally different experience from college and it's a whole new way of working, living, thinking. And so I really had to learn quick how to study right and how to manage my time because especially during that first year, it's just an abundance of reading, and assignments, and the fear of getting cold called, and applications, and, you know, they want you to have a job by the summer and things like that. And so there are a couple of things that I have found in terms of, like, starting school up again, I guess. That have helped. So the first thing is literally sitting down with a calendar and, like, writing out blocks of time that cannot be moved and not just the stuff that you have to do for school, but also stuff that you have to do for mys- for yourself. So for me, for instance, like, one thing that I do is three times a week, I do boxing class. And it helps me de-stress. I've always done, like, athletic work and sports to help me de-stress. I like to physically release all of that pent up tension in my body.

And so it's Tuesdays and Thursdays at five thirty PM and Saturdays at eight fifteen. And it's like, unless I cannot move something during that time, like, I'm not doing anything else other than boxing. During those times. So every morning, you know, Luke stays here and he cleans, I'm gonna go to the gym on Saturday mornings, and I'm gonna do my boxing because if I don't, I'm going to lose my mind. You know, like, I think people, especially in law school forget, there's this big myth that your entire life has to be law school, your entire life. Twenty four seven needs to be law school. And I and that is just a complete myth. Because what's gonna happen is very quickly, you're gonna burn out. And those physiological side effects of the stress are gonna hit you a lot harder and a lot quicker. Then if you're willing to

take time out of your day, out of your week, out of your month to not worry about law school.

And so that was something that I had to learn rather quickly. And thankfully, because I learned that having that time set out that I'm just you know, I'm not budging on that time for myself has helped me a lot. Like, when I was planning for my finals for studying. I knew that I had to donate, like, a lot of time to studying. Think the register recommended like thirty two hours per class or something, which is a lot of time out of out of your day.

But at the same time, I was like, if I do this schedule that they sent me, I'm -- I'm not gonna make it. [laughs] Like, I won't make it till last final. I'm gonna be dead on the floor. Okay. So what I did was I because I'm a big like formulaic logic person as I had a giant Excel spreadsheet, the entire finals period, from the first day of the reading period, to the last day of my finals.

And I put in, okay, these are when my finals are. These are when my -- when I have stuff that, like, I need to do with family so I don't lose my mind. Like, I didn't do any studying on Thanksgiving because Thanksgiving is a huge holiday in my family. So I was like, I can't I can't do any studying that day. And there were other things that I really wanted to do that I you know, could work around it.

So what I did was I still got all those hours in, but I was able to work them around what I knew I needed to do to maintain myself Because when I get way overstressed, it gets me into a lot of trouble because I make irrational decisions. When I get way too stressed, like, I was getting my last final for contracts. I was getting so stressed out because at the last minute, he changed the rules on what we could bring to our final. And so everybody was freaking out because everybody had to change everything that they were gonna bring and they had to reword stuff. And so I called, I was like, oh my god, mom.

I don't know what's what what I'm gonna do. Like, I have to go over these thirty pages again and make sure that there's there's nothing that he says we can't bring. And thankfully, because I was able to take a little bit of time out of that, I was able to figure it out. And I didn't I didn't over stress and make irrational decisions, so that was good. So big thing is is making sure that you literally block out time, like, sit down with your calendar or your planner or whatever it is that you use to track you know, whatever it is that you do, like, literally block out time out of your day, week, month for yourself.

And and stick to it. So there's that. And I mean, making sure that like, especially in school having people outside of school that you can vent to because sometimes you just need to vent. Like, you just need to like, get it out. She'd be like, I can't believe he's doing this.

Like, I can't believe this professor is doing this test right now. Like, it is killing me. But you you can't necessarily do that to other people in your class. So, like, having people outside of that, I guess, area where you're getting all your stress, having people separate, having having a safe space outside of wherever your most of your stress comes from is also very

helpful. You know, Luke does -- he he's in IT.

He doesn't know anything about the law. So I just go and be like, I cannot this professor thinks it's okay to do this. Like, what makes him think? And this is a good idea. And then, like, if we're both feeling stressed, we'll just go out and, like, go for a walk because we live pretty close to the water.

So it's definitely a learning curve for your stress and, like, everybody handles it differently. But I would recommend as a starting point like, exercise does help. I mean, don't over push yourself, you know, start with a walk or something. But making sure that, like, you do make time for yourself and that you have a safe space outside of wherever your stress is coming from is really, really gonna help. Anyone, like everybody, honestly.

**Lance McCall:** And I think it -- we have to remember that we are human before anything else. So if we don't care take care of ourselves, we're not going to perform well in academia life or professional life or even dealing with PI. If we neglect ourselves, it's gonna have a chain reaction.

**Jesse McCall:** Look, I already said, I'm not a human. I'm a permanently exhausted pigeon. I said this at the Teen Escape and I stand by it.

**Cassie Mummert:** I think you guys are all amazing now for everything that we all like, you guys have gone through and what we all go through, like, you know, because in some round about what we all understand even though we might not have, like, the same problems, we still feel, you know, what the other is feeling. So I give you all props for how you handle it and how far you guys have come and what all you guys are doing.

**Lance McCall:** And I know with Jesse, but Jesse is my brother. I had found it. Would he take care of himself before other things. Uh-huh. He should do more. That he often is a much happier and better student and gets better grades. So it's also important to encourage those of you that are in the same path of life to take care of themselves.

**Ethan McGrew:** I agree completely. If you don't take care of yourself first, then you're gonna do bad. There are days where I just I -- I can I can sit here at my computer. I can try and do school. I can stare at the screen.

I can listen to all the book. I can do three hours of school or whatever and get nothing done. I just stare and it's just -- I'm just glazed over. And just so I don't feel good, and I know that I that I am not mentally capable of intaking and processing new data or information. And on those days, it sucks, but why waste your time?

There -- I I've just had to learn to be like, I just can't do school today. I'll go do something else. I'll do housework. I'll play games on the computer. I'll draw or something.

I'll just be like, I just cannot -- Like, today is not a day where I can intake information. It just isn't. And so it -- it can be real hard to accept that sometimes even if you feel physically okay enough to, like, sit here and do something, If you're not mentally able to do it, it doesn't matter.

**Lance McCall:** Like, for me, this this round simple group of friends. It's honestly the best thing that's ever come in my life with PI because -- you you'll have friends and family that are receptive and they understand to an extent you or the challenges that come up with PI or chronic life, like, for instance, many people can understand, okay, yeah, I don't feel good today. Let's cancel the dinner we had. But that's never gonna be the understanding that it is if you cancel dinner with somebody who had a similar condition who actually understands the lid on nuances of it, and the heartbreak of when you have to send that message saying, hey, I have to cancel.

I don't feel good or, hey, I'm under the weather. I can't do this last minute. That finding the one that truly knows it inside it out. It's hard, and when you find them, keep them. [] keep them.

**Victoria Medl:** The moral of the story, guys. If you neglect yourselves, you neglects the people you care about. You can't perform well, take care of yourselves, and appreciate every moment that you're given. Be grateful for every experience that you have. And we are in the path that we're supposed to be at, and then we have to remind ourselves of that. That is my two cents.

**Jesse McCall:** A wise man once said, if you neglect yourself, you wreck yourself. Just saying, That's my two cent. I love y'all so much, but I really need to get going because I have an exam...

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