

## **ON GRADES**

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**Law school modes of evaluation leave much to be desired. In a context where there is so little feedback, how one happens to do on a particular day on a three or four hour test tends to take on an undeserved importance and magnitude. Some even construe their grades as the final word on their abilities and opportunities as a future lawyer. Nothing could be further from the truth.**

**Your grades, whatever they happen to be, are an indication of how well you fared for a few hours in applying your learning to a narrow, often peculiar format, as determined by someone else's sometimes arbitrary, usually subjective judgment. In this imperfect system, injustices are inevitable. People who studied hard may not do as well as they should or could have. People who studies hard may not do as well as they should or could have. People who hardly studies may excel. The course that you thought you aced would represent your worst grade. The exam that you thought you bombed could come back as your best grade. And so on.**

**Let your grades inform your life, not define, diminish or even exalt it. They are a means of feedback, letting you know whether you have figured out how to play the exam-taking game. If your grades aren't what they should be, take the offensive, seeking out people and resources to help you to improve your exam skills. Consult with each of your professors. Find a tutor. Speak with upperclass students who have done well in the given courses you are now preparing for. Take practice exams. Ask your professors for feedback on your practice runs.**

**For that matter, you have the power to dilute the significance of grades by demonstrating your excellence in other contexts. Write on to a journal. Participate in moot court competitions. Intern for a judge. Become a research assistant to a member of the faculty. Participate in a clinic. These are among the ways for you to create value, establish yourself as a capable prospective practitioner and shine.**

**As you do everything you can to enhance your performance, please also try to keep matters in perspective. Remember that the race is long, and that to finish the race is to win the race. Pace yourself, and know that time is on your side. Be appreciative and grateful**

**for the strides that you are making. Know that every step, however small, puts you that much closer to realizing your goal.**

**Further, I promise you that on the occasion of your first real estate closing, for example, no one around that conference room table will turn to you and ask, “By the way, what did you get in Property?” At your first oral argument on, for instance, a products liability case, the judge won’t interrupt to inquire, “So, counselor, how did you do in Torts?” In life, what counts is who you are and what you are doing in the present moment.**

**You are not your grades, or, for that matter, your resume or your law journal placement or your summer job. Grades are illusory. They are outside indicia that could never have the power to define you or limit the possibilities available to you unless you let them. It’s been said that no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Don’t you dare give that permission to any faculty member or classmate or administrator or colleague or anyone else.**

**Only you create the reality that your grades represent. No one else. View them as an opportunity for learning, self-knowledge and growth. Throughout, keep your head high. Do not be cruel to yourself. Beyond a healthy discipline, be gentle with yourself. Hold tight to your dignity, integrity and belief in yourself. You are precisely where you should be. You have succeeded before. You are a success now.**

**Think, act and react as a successful, prosperous and intelligent person would. Remember that what you think about most expands. What you think about most is what you move towards. Success is more attitude than it is aptitude. With your thoughts and attitudes, you are writing your ticket.**