A lawyer’s trainee year is intense. Whether it is because it is your first full-time job, the work is challenging (or not challenging at all as you become the photocopy expert), or you are rotating through a branch that you simply do not like, there will be moments when you wonder whose idea it was to become a lawyer.

You will meet lots of inspiring and impressive colleagues (and clients) along the way and gain exposure to (hopefully) interesting and challenging files. But many trainees will agree that they are exhausted at the end of their 12-month supervised workplace training.

This list reflects some of the things I did (or wish I’d done) to get through the experience and still bring myself to say “I do” at the admission ceremony.

**Talk to other trainees**
If you are undertaking your traineeship with other young lawyers, share experiences with one another.

Sharing any difficult experiences (albeit in an appropriate way) with fellow trainees will help you quickly realise that others have been there before and that the experience is not personal. They may even have some tips on ways to handle such situations.

**Take a deep breath and smile**
As partners will tell you, attitude is everything. This does not mean you need to embrace a Mary Poppins-like cheery disposition while working on tasks (or files, or with clients, or other lawyers) that you do not like.

My personal method for survival if I was ever bored, stressed, overwhelmed or just plain didn’t like something, was to nurture myself with a reward. Usually it was with coffee from a nearby coffee shop, after I checked to see if any other junior lawyers wanted to come along for the journey. Takeaway coffee and an opportunity to vent, or bounce around ideas – nothing beats it.

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**YOUNG LAWYERS SHORT STORY COMPETITION**

Looking for a way to express your creative side? The LIV Young Lawyers Professional Development Committee is launching a short story competition. We are looking for submissions between 750 and 1500 words; they must have a ‘legal flavour’ and are due on 30 May 2011.

The winning entry will receive a prize and be published in the final edition of the *YLJ* for the year in November. All other submissions will be published online. For more information on how to enter see [www.liv.asn.au/younglawyers](http://www.liv.asn.au/younglawyers).
Billables – Do it right
When you are new and inexperienced, it is often easy to “discount” your time to take into account the knowledge that you think you should already have. Don’t do this. Your charge out rate already reflects your experience. The more you discount, the longer you will need to stay back in order to meet any billable requirements that your firm expects of you.

Make plans after work
Your work will still be there tomorrow. While you won’t always have the flexibility of leaving the task until the next day, having other commitments is a convenient way to convince yourself (and others) that you really should leave while it is still daylight.
(This does not necessarily extend to making dinner plans with friends. During your trainee year, it is more likely that you will become known as the friend who always cancels, rather than actually using it as a successful strategy for finishing work at a reasonable hour.)

However, make it to your indoor soccer match every Monday, your French lessons or that cooking class you booked months ago. The reality is that it is much easier to leave the office on the basis of those types of commitments.

Be an active LIV Young Lawyers’ Section member
Whether you join a Young Lawyers committee, or simply attend functions and events hosted by the YLS, being an active member enables you to meet other young lawyers and share experiences. The next editorial committee meeting is on 23 June if you are interested.

Make the most of your trainee year and discover the areas of law that you love or can live without. And try as many different coffee shops as possible. Good luck.

GEORGETTE APOSTOLOPOULOS is co-chair of the Young Lawyers’ Section Editorial Committee. She survived her trainee year, was admitted in 2009 and is now an in-house intellectual property lawyer at the University of Melbourne.