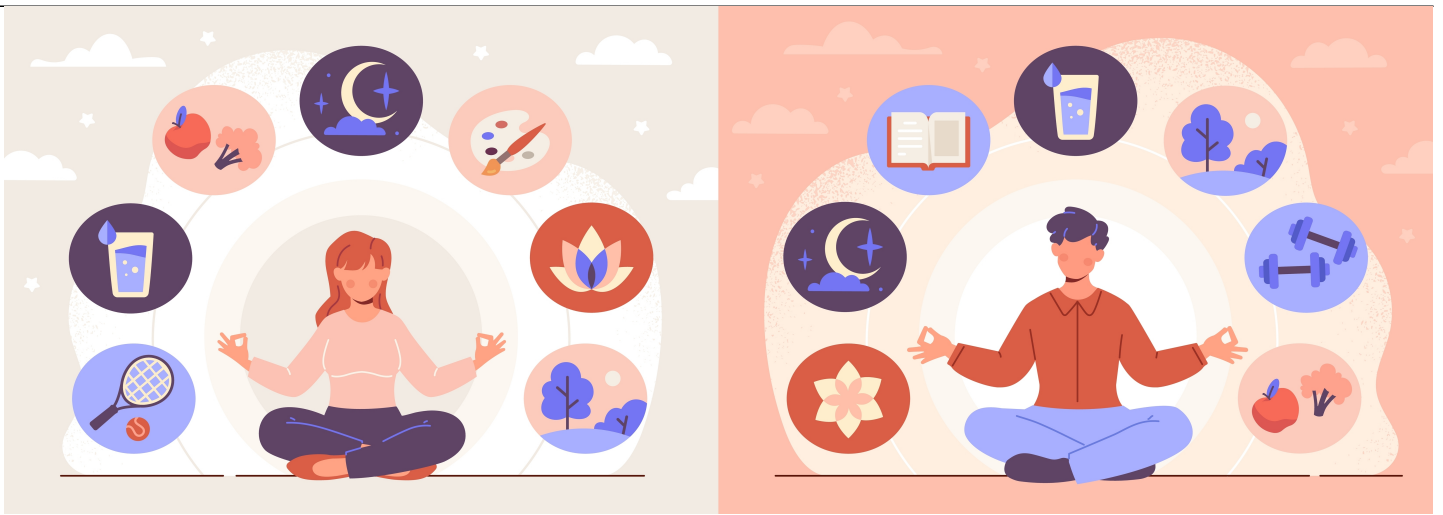

ACC DOCKET

INFORMED. INDISPENSABLE. IN-HOUSE.

Positively Legal: New Habits for a New Year

Skills and Professional Development



Banner artwork by [mentalmind / Shutterstock.com](#)

We all want to start the new year with a huge forward momentum – personally (exercising, eating healthier, meditating) and professionally (building team morale, exploring new technologies, and strengthening stakeholder relationships). But what if you are stuck and don't know where to start? The best way to solve that is to be inspired by what others are doing!

To learn about some of the positive practices in-house counsel are planning to use in 2023, I spoke with:

[Amanda Gore](#) (GC - Great Southern Bank),

[Anastasia Gotjamanos](#) (Group GC - Bynrecut Group),

[Karen Lee](#) (Associate Director – Legal and Business Conduct at Gilead Sciences),

[Laura Hartman](#) (General Counsel – Grampians Health),

[Lori Middlehurst](#) (Senior Director Global Employment Law – Salesforce and ACC NSW Divisional President and Board Member),

[Michael Guilday](#) (GC and Head of Property, Sydney Fish Market), and

[Teresa Leone](#) (Senior Manager, Legal and Corporate Service Line, Luxembourg)

Which positive practices do you want to develop in 2023?

Guilday wants to build his active listening. “I would like to become a better listener,” he says, “by giving all stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback and voice concerns. I hope this will help improve the authenticity of my leadership.”



Active listening is essential to understanding and being able to provide important feedback to others. Yellow_man / Shutterstock.com

He also wants to be “more proactive and less reactive” and hopes to focus on transformation at work, “advocating for, and championing change throughout my organization.” Finally, he wants to remain continually active throughout 2023, understanding that positive physical practices also support mental health. “I aim to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day with a view to participating in several community activities like fun runs and ocean swims.”

I wrote about the benefits of exercise in the articles [Befriending Stress](#) and [Positive Practices to Enhance Your Career](#).

Gore started the year off with a gratitude jar. “You fill an empty jar with notes about what you are grateful for and good things that have happened, then on New Year’s Eve, you empty it and read about all the great things that you have experienced through the year. I am an optimist, so even

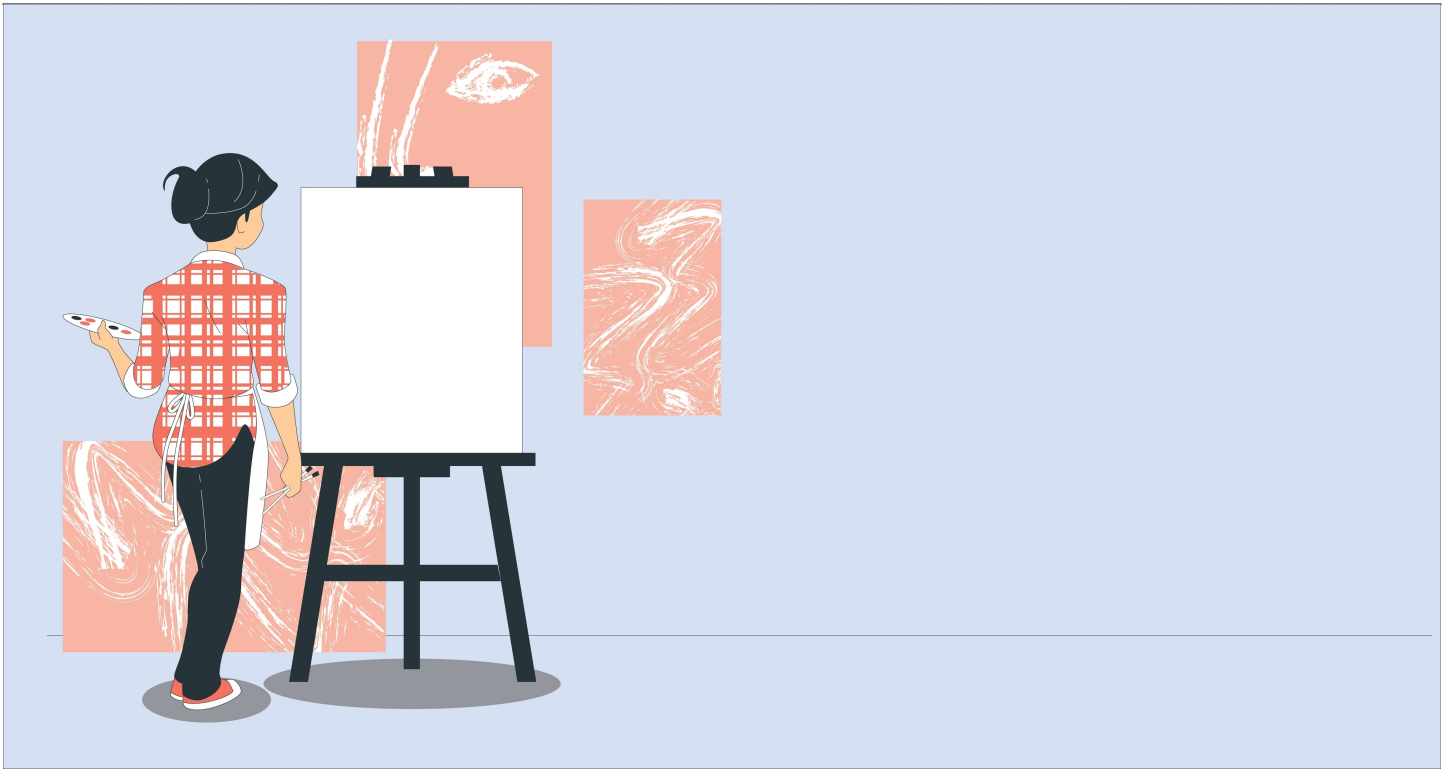
though I've started with a Winnie-the-Pooh sized honey jar, I expect I will be creating a second jar well before New Year's 2023!"



Great Southern Bank General Counsel [Amanda Gore](#) will utilize a gratitude jar to have the ability to reflect on her grateful moments in 2023. *mentalmind / Shutterstock.com*

She has also created a “studio” or space for herself to be more creative — be it oil painting, pastels, or creative writing. It has “a blank canvas which I have a few ideas for.”

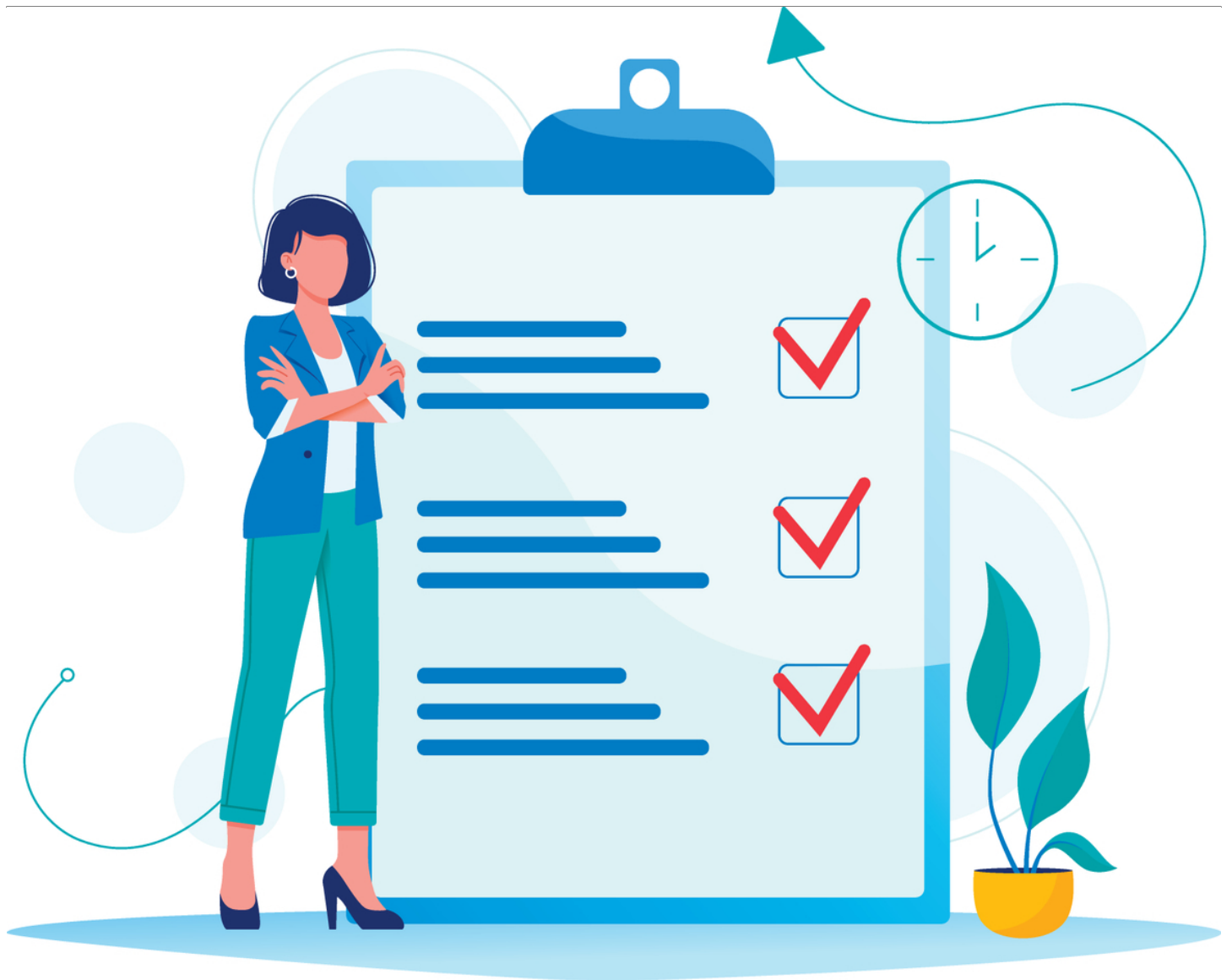
Finally, Gore is, like many others, going to realize the “longed for trips that have not happened over the past few years.” With the additional leave she has been able to purchase through work, she and her partner will spend time with family in Sweden and visit Japan during the Sakura season. “Both trips will get special entry into the gratitude jar especially given travel is extra expensive currently so feel very privileged to be going.”



Creating an immersive environment allows room to spark creative thinking, productivity, and inspiration. Storyet / Shutterstock.com

For more on the benefits of a gratitude practice see my earlier article [Positive Practices to Enhance Your Career](#).

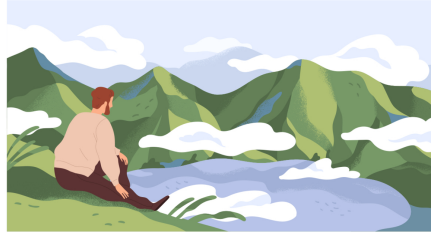
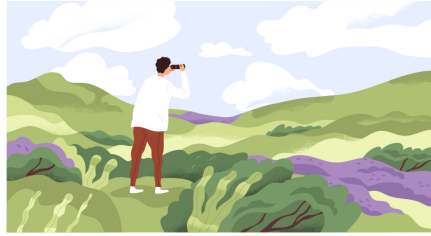
Gotjamanos is starting the year with a positive mindset. She is also starting a “to-do’ list for everything — work, family, shopping, and even general life administration!” Having a job requiring a lot of “sitting at a desk,” means that Gotjamanos wants to consciously include more cardio exercise into her life. “I am trying new ways to keep moving — tennis, running [Parkrun](#), and more stairs!”



By prioritizing your tasks, you will become more efficient and generate a feeling of satisfaction while accomplishing your goals. Liliia_A / Shutterstock.com

Hartman is cultivating a practice of “remembering to stay present, slow down, and take the opportunity to see the world more through my two-year-old’s eyes.” For Hartman, this takes the form of “taking the time to wonder at every experience and be curious about how things work (maybe less so the temper tantrums and refusing to wear clothes!)”

Lee wants to spend “more time in nature and with animals.” She is also “embracing art, color, and creativity.” Like Gore, Lee will cultivate a gratitude practice in 2023 with a focus on “being grateful for the small and wonderful things in life.” Finally, she will begin a positive mindset of “saying yes to trying new things.”



Spending time in nature leads to numerous health benefits including better emotional well-being, lowered stress, and a positive impact on mental health. GoodStudio / Shutterstock.com

For tips about [using travel and nature to support your wellbeing](#), see my article from September 2022 and to learn about the power of nature see [How Nature Can Reduce Mental Fatigue](#).

Leone will be cultivating some introspective practices in 2023. She will be meditating and “listening to my body,” both important counterbalances to our physically active lifestyles and just as important for rest and recovery. She will also nurture the ability of “not judging, being open to feedback, and not being afraid of others’ judgment.”



Practicing meditation improves the quality of your life by relieving anxiety, calming your brain, and reducing stress. GoodStudio / Shutterstock.com

To learn more about the benefits of meditation see my articles on [Positive Practices Help Reduce Burnout](#) and [Taming the Monkey Mind with Meditation](#).

Middlehurst, an avid open water swimmer, will continue to nurture that practice and will participate in a "[Swimtrek](#), a curated swim tour with a group of keen swimmers to the Palawan area of the Philippines." At work, Middlehurst will continue to "try and maintain my sense of humor and never take myself too seriously."

For more on the importance of humor see my article [What Spider-Man Can Teach Us About Positivity, Humor, and Teamwork](#).

Which practices will you try to foster in your legal practice or team this year?

Guilday wants to "promote better collaboration in the workplace, especially between service functions and business units. I will need to be physically present in the office as much as possible and engage

with as many colleagues as possible. I believe this is increasingly important because collaboration has in many situations been made more difficult (resulting in undesirable siloed work practices) due to an increased use of remote working arrangements.”



Sydney Fish's General Counsel and Head of Property Micheal Guilday stresses the importance of collaboration and engagement in the workplace with colleagues. *Overearth / Shutterstock.com*

He also wants to help his organization successfully achieve their ESG outcomes through “goal setting, measuring progress, and integrating ESG success factors into business decision making.” Guilday, like many other GCs wants to introduce legal technology (in relation to legal research, contract/document management, and/or intake/matter management)” aiming to “improve the legal function’s efficiency” and “provide a better customer experience for business stakeholders.”

He will focus on “empowering my trusted outside counsel to represent my organization within well-defined areas, thereby increasing the depth and reach of the legal function.” Finally, Guilday is increasing his in-house network by joining committees including ACC Australia’s NSW Executive Committee. He believes this will also give him an opportunity to “contribute to the success of in-house lawyers.”

Gore will continue the trusted advisor model. “As in-house counsel it is important to know the business you work in and understand how you are working together on delivering strategic initiatives and goals. We have a very strong sense of purpose at Great Southern Bank, being ‘To help every Australian own their own home.’” Gore believes that mutual trust is created through “working closely with people to genuinely understand what keeps them awake at night and understand their business priorities.”

Experience helps her recognize “the more you partner with the business, the more likely it is that your internal clients will grow to understand your professional duties and demands as a lawyer. It’s like any relationship, you need to make time and space for it, it doesn’t happen by magic.”

For Gotjamanos, the answer is simple, she wants to “find a new junior legal counsel to help share the workload!”

Hartman, in a Greenfields appointment, started at a “very exciting time for legal services in my organization.” She hopes to promote a design-informed approach to the way she delivers legal services. “This approach has empathy at its core — we are curious about our stakeholders’ needs and ask ‘Why?’ Lawyers sometimes have a tendency to dive on in with a solution.

“Taking an empathetic approach allows us to tackle opportunities at a systems level and produce results which are human-centered. This year we’re also experimenting with some significant process automation projects and running user research alongside. I’m so excited to both create solutions and gain meaningful insight as to their impact!”

Lee is “passionate about gamification in legal training and making legal concepts more interesting and engaging for the business. I find that gamification is quite effective in inspiring inquisitiveness and behavioral change.”

Leone is again looking inwards and will be “listening to my inner wisdom,” something I am also trying to reconnect with this year and which, I find, often results from a consistent mediation practice.

Finally, Middlehurst wants to develop more mini-outings with her team, “for instance lunch in a different area of the city. We have a team member on assignment from the United States and that’s a good way to help her explore Sydney.”



As an in-house counsel, try to integrate small team outings into your work schedule to build camaraderie amongst fellow workers. [xiaobaiv/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/xiaobaiv)

Was there anything you tried in 2022 but stopped doing and why?

Guilday started gathering information about different legal technologies available to in-house lawyers but had to stop because of workload pressures. “Hopefully, I will be able to re-commence this work in 2023.”

2022 saw Hartman “try my hand at being a legal designer full-time. I absolutely loved my design firm, the work, and my team, but I really missed the substantive legal component of my work and participating in the public sector. I’m so lucky that I can now combine legal service design and more of the substantive 'lawyering' in my new role.”

Lee, like many others, was unsuccessful in her attempts to travel, leaving her with a feeling that she “missed being overseas.” However, she has been able to gradually “stop/lessen that feeling as more and more I’m loving how incredible Australia is and am loving exploring different parts of my own country. It has made me more grateful and opened my eyes to just how lucky we are here.”

Leone is going to leave “saying yes to everything” in 2022 (where I agree it belongs)!

Which books/podcasts did you enjoy in 2022 and why?



By partaking in these positive practices such as reading books or listening to podcasts, you can enhance your knowledge, literacy, and digest some key takeaways. Olly Kava/ Shutterstock.com

Guilday enjoyed several John le Carré novels, including [The Night Manager](#) and legally:

- Richard Susskind's [Tomorrow's Lawyers](#) — “a must for every lawyer interested in how the legal profession is evolving globally, especially in light of emerging legal technologies and the increasing operationalisation of in-house legal functions.”
- [The ACC Insider Podcast](#) — “I listened to most of all the 2022 series. I especially liked Mike Madden’s “*Why you need your GC in your leadership team.*” A key takeaway for me is the importance of developing sound leadership skills for GCs to be successful in having and maintaining a seat at the company table.”

Gore has started reading:

-
- Brene Brown’s “[Atlas of the Heart](#)” — “I am loving this book a chapter or two in. In the authors words, ‘If we want to find the way back to ourselves and one another, we need language and grounded confidence to both tell our stories and be stewards of the stories that we hear. This is the framework for meaningful connection.’”
 - Ryan Holiday’s “[Courage is Calling](#)” — “Three-quarters of the way through, this book is inspiring. It examines the timeless Stoic virtues, talks about why courage is so important and explains how we can cultivate it. A quote I enjoy from the book: ‘Courage is defined in the moment. In less than a moment. When we decide to step out or step up. To leap or to step back. A person isn’t brave, generally. We are brave, specifically. For a few seconds. For a few seconds of embarrassing bravery we can be great. And that is enough.’”
 - [The Trusted Advisor](#) — “I’m reading the 20th anniversary edition which is a good refresher returning to the book again.”

Gotjamos reads three newspapers every weekend ([The West Australian](#), [The Australian](#), and [The Financial Review](#)) “I love the variety — local stories, international events, travel, cooking, sport. It inspires me to try new things and find new places to visit.”

Hartman tends to “use podcasts as my down-time rather than for professional development. I loved the [Stuff the British Stole](#) podcast in 2022 from the ABC. The takeaway I’ll bring in 2023 from that is the importance of always challenging the status quo and our assumptions about ‘the way things are.’ We need to listen, and to create opportunities for listening, in any given situation.”

Lee enjoyed Raymond Tang’s TedTalk, [Be Humble — And Other Lessons from the Philosophy of Water](#) where “the speaker shares about the three lessons from water being humility, harmony, and openness to change. One takeaway I hope to bring into 2023 is to remain grounded, maintain a humble mindset, and be more present. I want to be curious and genuinely interested in the unique stories and experiences of the people around me, be very open to learning from others, and transformation through that.”

Leone enjoyed Carl Rogers’ [Becoming Partners](#).

Middlehurst “went through a number of non-fiction books in quick succession towards the end of the year — Julia Bank’s [Power Play](#), Julia Gillard’s [Not Now Not Ever](#), Kate Ellis’ [Sex Lies and Question Time](#), Nina Totenberg’s [My Dinners with Ruth](#), and Jeffrey Rosen’s [Conversations with RBG](#) (and yes, I did see the fabulous Heather Mitchell in the one woman play [RBG: Of Many, One](#)) — so, I think I was in need of reassurance that strong women were still moving the needle.”

For more on women leading differently, see my [article](#) from 2022.

Practical ways to build healthy habits

Finally, one of my longstanding favorite podcasts, [The Tim Ferriss Show](#), started the year with [Atomic Habits](#) author James Clear who reiterates “the [four laws of behavior change](#) ... if you want to build a good habit, you want to make your habits obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying. And if you want to break a bad habit, you just do the opposite of those four.” The episode provides an abundance of tips and examples to successfully cultivate healthy habits and stop the less desirable habits as you move

into 2023.

For anyone not quite sure how to put into practice new healthy habits, my 2022 article, [Healthy Habits for a Positive Mindset](#), provides some tips on how to create healthy habits and get rid of undesirable habits.

Hopefully these practices will provide inspiration if you are looking to build in some new habits and practices for 2023!

Disclaimer: The information in any resource in this website should not be construed as legal advice or as a legal opinion on specific facts, and should not be considered representing the views of its authors, its sponsors, and/or ACC. These resources are not intended as a definitive statement on the subject addressed. Rather, they are intended to serve as a tool providing practical guidance and references for the busy in-house practitioner and other readers.

[Caterina Cavallaro](#)



Associate General Counsel

VGW Holdings Limited

Caterina Cavallaro is associate general counsel at VGW.

She combines technical legal skills with practical business understanding and a love of innovation, project management, and legal technology to improve ways of working within the legal industry. She is a member of the ACC's In-House In-Health and Legal Technology and Innovation Special Interest

Groups.

In addition to her legal skills she has a Diploma of Positive Psychology and Wellness and is a freelance writer. Her “Positively Legal” column for the *ACC Docket* focuses on the intersection of neuroscience, positive psychology, and in-house practice by interviewing experts and fellow lawyers and curating up to date quality research, podcasts and books to help lawyers learn to take control of their own wellness and support their careers.

Outside of work, Cavallaro loves traveling, snorkeling, meditating and spending time in nature.