

# THE TENSION TRACKER

*An Honest Assessment for Municipal Leaders  
Seeking Growth in the Grind*

**Move beyond  
balance.**

**Embrace the  
tension.**

**Build a life,  
and a city,  
worth leading.**

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# WELCOME & PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Welcome, Municipal Leader.

You don't need another productivity hack.  
You need a mirror.

This guide was built for those of you living on the municipal tightrope and leading in the tension where meetings stretch into dinner, emails don't stop, and expectations never clock out. If you've felt the pull between your professional duties and your personal health, between public service and private peace, you're in the right place.

**The truth?**

Balance is bullsh\*t.

What we really need to do is *master the tension*.

This tool will help you pause, reflect, and intentionally assess your life across three essential spheres:

- **Personal** — your well-being
- **Relational** — your closest connections
- **Vocational** — your calling and purpose

You'll identify where you're thriving, where you're stretched, and where you're at risk of snapping. Then, you'll reflect deeply on your legacy and take the first steps to reverse-engineer a meaningful life that turns it into reality.

This is more than an assessment. It's a turning point.

Ready? Let's go.

# THE THREE SPHERES OF A VIBRANT LIFE

**Forget balance.**

It's not a teeter-totter between "work" and "life." Your world is more layered than that.

True leadership and health happen when you tune the tension across all three spheres of your life:

## **1. Personal**

Your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

- Are you energized or depleted?
- Are you learning or flatlining?
- Are you present or just pushing through?

## **2. Relational**

Your spouse or partner, children or dependents, and inner circle.

- Are the people closest to you seen, heard, and valued?
- Are you parenting or just managing?
- Do you even know who your friends are anymore?

## **3. Vocational**

Your work, engagement, and service to the world.

- Are you still connected to your why?
- Do you experience joy in your role or just duty?
- Are you serving from overflow or obligation?

**Every sphere is under tension.** The goal is not to eliminate it—it's to manage it with intention.

Use the next few pages to assess where you are, where you're being stretched, and what you might be neglecting.

# STEP 1: PERSONAL SPHERE ASSESSMENT

## Physical

- On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate your current physical health and energy?
- What habits are giving you life right now? What's draining it?
- Are you moving your body regularly? Sleeping enough? Eating to fuel?

## Mental

- Are you feeding your mind intentionally—books, podcasts, learning?
- What's the quality of your self-talk lately?
- What are your current mental stressors?

## Emotional

- Are you emotionally present in your life—or just numbing, avoiding, or pushing?
- How often do you feel joy? Gratitude? Anxiety? Frustration?
- When was the last time you talked to someone about how you're really doing?

## Reflection Prompt:

"What one shift would most impact your personal health over the next 30 days?"

## STEP 2: RELATIONAL SPHERE ASSESSMENT

### Intimate

- Are your spouse/partner and kids (or closest relationships) thriving in your presence or surviving around your absence?
- Do they feel seen, heard, and prioritized?
- Do **you** feel loved and filled by these relationships?

### Community

- Do you still know who your friends are?
- When was the last time you reached out just to connect, not to network or fix something?

### Responsibility

- Are you guiding the people who depend on you or just managing logistics?
- Are you building meaningful connection, or running on autopilot?

### Reflection Prompt:

"Which relationship in your life needs intentional repair, investment, or attention right now?"

## STEP 3: PROFESSIONAL SPHERE ASSESSMENT

### Purpose

- Are you still connected to the “why” behind your work?
- Do you feel like you’re growing or just grinding?
- How are you engaging your community outside of “work.”

### Play

- Is there any joy in your workday?
- How are you recharging on the weekends?
- When was the last time you did something just because it lit you up?

### Service

- Are you leading and serving from a full cup or out of obligation and burnout?
- Are you clear on who your leadership impacts?

### Reflection Prompt:

"What's one boundary or change that would help you reconnect with the mission behind your leadership?"

## STEP 4: WRITE YOUR OBITUARY

### Why This Matters

You don't stumble into legacy.  
You build it—brick by brick, moment by moment.

This exercise helps you zoom out, face the end, and ask: What story do I want my life to tell?

### Prompt: Write Your Obituary

Imagine it's many years from now. Your community is gathered. Your loved ones are speaking. Your work is complete. Your life has been lived.

- Who shows up to your funeral?
- What do they say about you?
- What did your leadership and impact create?
- Who are the people you shaped, protected, or inspired?
- How did you show up in the tension—at home, at work, and in yourself?
- What do they miss most about you?

Space to write:

(Use a blank page of paper or notebook to capture these thoughts.)

# STEP 5: REVERSE-ENGINEER YOUR LIFE

Your obituary is the destination.  
Now let's build the map.

**“If that’s how I want to be remembered...what needs to change now?”**

Use these prompts to identify intentional shifts:

## **Boundaries**

- What are you currently allowing that doesn't serve the legacy you want?

## **Habits**

- What daily or weekly rhythm would future-you thank you for?

## **Relationships**

- Who needs more of your attention?
- Where do you need to forgive or ask for it?

## **Leadership**

- What kind of leader must you become to create the impact you described?
- What needs to go so something greater can grow?

## **Final Prompt:**

**"What's one action I can take this week to step closer to the life I wrote above?"**



## STEP 6: THE RUBBERBAND RULES

You are being stretched across multiple demands—home, work, relationships, leadership, health.

That's not failure. That's physics.

Like a rubberband, your life has limits. You can stretch it—but you must stretch it on purpose.

### The 5 Rubberband Rules

**1. You need direction.**

You can't stretch toward what you can't see.

Without vision, tension becomes confusion.

**2. Every stretch requires a sacrifice.**

You cannot pull everything at once.

Priorities aren't about what's important—they're about what's **most** important.

**3. Your capacity is finite.**

Even steel cables snap.

Rest isn't a reward—it's a requirement.

**4. Tension isn't the enemy. Aimlessness is.**

Stop chasing balance. Start pursuing alignment.

**5. Communication is your anchor.**

The people in your life have their own bands.

Talk to them. Align with them. Lead with them.

**Reflection Prompt:**

"Which rule have I been ignoring and what's the cost?"

## STEP 7: YOUR ACTION PLAN

You've assessed where you are.

You've imagined where you want to be.

Now it's time to bridge the gap—**with intention.**

Use your notebook to outline the specific changes you're ready to make in response to what you've uncovered.

### **Boundaries**

What do you need to start saying no to?

What time, energy, or emotional drains can you eliminate or protect against?

**I will set or reinforce the following boundaries:**

### **Habits**

What recurring actions will support your personal, relational, or professional well-being?

**I will start or strengthen these habits:**

### **Relationships**

Who needs your presence, your listening, your care, your attention?

**I will reconnect, repair, or deepen the following relationships:**

### **Leadership**

What is one intentional step you can take in the next week to lead from a place of alignment?

**My leadership shift:**

At the bottom of the page, you can include a signature line or simply the text:

**Legacy doesn't happen by accident. It begins with action. Today is the day.**

# LET'S KEEP BUILDING—TOGETHER

This guide is just the beginning.

Municipal leadership demands more than tips and tools. It calls for community, clarity, and courage to lead in the tension and leave a legacy.

If this guide sparked something in you, let's take the next step.

## **Keynote Speaking & Full-Day Immersive Workshops**

Need to challenge your team or inspire your city leaders?

Seth delivers high-impact, story-driven keynotes and full-day workshops designed for municipal professionals navigating real-life pressure, politics, and purpose.

Let's turn insight into culture-shifting action.

[Book a Strategy Call](#)

## **MLDC: Municipal Leadership Development Circle**

You weren't meant to lead alone.

The MLDC is an ongoing leadership development experience exclusively for city managers and administrators who are ready to:

- Lead with authenticity
- Grow with accountability
- Thrive in community

Weekly content and peer connections. Long-term support.

[Explore the MLDC](#)

## **Stay Connected**

For speaking, workshops, or coaching:

[www.haltingwinter.com](http://www.haltingwinter.com)

You're doing sacred work. Let's build what lasts.

## FINAL REFLECTION & THANK YOU

You've done something most leaders never make time for:  
You stopped. You looked inward. You got honest.

That matters.

Leadership isn't just about systems and structures.  
It's about people. And the most important person you lead is **yourself**.

This guide wasn't about perfection. It was about **perspective**.  
It was about helping you see where tension exists in your life and giving you  
the tools to **stretch with purpose** instead of snapping under pressure.

The journey doesn't end here.

You now have a clearer picture of where you are, where you want to go, and  
what has to change to get there.

### Final Prompt

What's one thing from this guide that you want to revisit or deepen over the  
next 30 days?

Write it down. Re-read it weekly. Let it guide your stretch.

Thank you for the work you do. The city you serve. The people you lead.  
**Your life and your leadership matter.**

Keep going.

We need you.