

STEEL ON STEEL

Adapted from the original format written by Mark Houston

What Is Steel on Steel?

Steel on Steel is a structured spiritual exercise designed for members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) who are actively pursuing deeper personal growth and a more grounded, sustainable recovery—what the Big Book calls the “Fourth Dimension of existence.”

The name “Steel on Steel” is inspired by the idea that just as metal sharpens metal, we help refine each other through honest reflection and accountability. The phrase comes from Proverbs 27:17: *“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”*

This exercise is designed for a small group (ideally four people) that meets once a month and is centered on an **intense personal commitment** from each member to the group. Each person supports the others in their journey through the AA program, with a specific focus on emotional sobriety, service, self-awareness, and spiritual growth.

This is a rigorous process of **Love** and **Action**. **Please do not begin unless you are fully committed to the AA program, including your emotional, relational, financial, and spiritual well-being, and to helping others do the same.**

In Steel on Steel, nothing is held back because we give each other Spiritual Consent. Spiritual Consent means giving trusted members of the group explicit permission to speak into every area of our lives, guided by love and with growth as the goal. It is a conscious agreement to let others reflect what we may not want to see, but need to.

In this space, everything is on the table. **No part of our lives is off limits** if it can serve our recovery, deepen our integrity, or move us closer to freedom. This kind of consent isn’t casual; it’s sacred and honored. And once given, it opens the door to real transformation.

Steel on Steel is rooted in mutual accountability and care. Each participant gives and receives **honest feedback, guided by respect and compassion**. The purpose is not to critique, shame, or fix each other, but to serve as spiritual mirrors who reflect back insights and blind spots that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Participants are encouraged to be open to feedback on **all areas of life**, trusting that this kind of transparency, held in love and integrity, can foster real transformation. The format includes meditation, reading, personal sharing, and group reflection.

This is not a space for passive participation. It is designed for individuals who want to grow, be authentic, and take responsibility for their own personal development.

In the Steel on Steel meeting, we use a timer to give each person up to **10 minutes** to share where they are right now. **The time limit matters**. It helps us stay clear, focused, and honest, and prevents us from slipping into explanation, defense, or performance.

Please honor the boundary. Share directly from your current experience, especially the places where your path has felt unclear, conflicted, or uncomfortable. This is not the time to edit or polish. It’s a time to say what’s true.

We come here to leave nothing unexamined. Every one of us struggles with patterns of ego, fear, avoidance, and control. None of us are immune. That’s why we need each other, and why we need access to something greater than ourselves.

We rely on the Power to do the work we can’t do alone. But we also trust that Source can speak through the voices in this room, helping us illuminate the places where we’re stuck, and offering us clarity we might not find on our own.

We are not here to judge, correct, or shame each other. We are here to witness with care, reflect what we see, and create space for honest insight. The work is deep, but the spirit is gentle.

We come together to support each other in letting go of what no longer serves—and to learn how to live with more alignment, integrity, and intention, guided by something beyond our own will.

Steel on Steel exists to help us see ourselves clearly and grow toward deeper freedom, responsibility, and connection. By **showing up honestly, listening generously, and reflecting courageously**, we build a path to more meaningful sobriety, together.

No one gets there alone. But together, through action and love, we each become capable of more than we thought possible.

Let's begin. *Pick someone to read aloud:*

Welcome to Steel on Steel

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." —Proverbs 27:17

The AA way of life is a journey. Sometimes the road feels steady; other times it's steep, unclear, or lonely. In those moments, it's easy to lose our footing—to forget why we started, to consider stepping back, or to question whether we're really changing.

One of the most meaningful gifts we're given on this path is the presence of friends who both support us and challenge us to keep showing up, keep growing, and stay awake to the work.

A true friend is someone who sees your potential and invites you to step into it—even when it's uncomfortable. The presence of that kind of friendship has the power to bring us into deeper alignment with the Source of clarity, direction, and strength that lives within us and around us.

Real friendship isn't about agreement or comfort. It's about resonance. It sharpens us. It helps us remember who we are when we've forgotten. **True friends tell you the truth and even risk hurting your feelings because they love you and have your best interests at heart.**

Choose the people you walk with carefully. Don't look for perfection. Look for people who are grounded in practice and willing to grow. And just as importantly, take time to reflect on the kind of friend you are to others. Are you showing up fully? Are you asking the deeper questions? Are you putting shared purpose before personal comfort? The people you surround yourself with matter. So does the way you show up in their lives. This work is hard. Doing it in good company makes it possible.

This Steel on Steel meeting is about action and truth. It's where we pause to take a serious look at where we are—spiritually, emotionally, and practically. Each of us will be given 10 minutes to share openly and specifically about our current condition.

After we share, we invite the group to act as a mirror, reflecting back honest questions and observations that can help us grow. The goal isn't to be right or to sound good. The goal is to gain a clearer understanding. To ask better questions. To get real.

We allow these group reflections—followed by personal meditation on what was shared—to serve as a channel for deeper awareness and spiritual guidance. This process is meant to guide us, not control us. It's an invitation to listen with humility and act with integrity.

To begin, we'll read a selection from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. This passage should remind each of us: **What the problem is, Who causes the problem, What the penalty is for leaving the problem unchecked, What specific decision we made in step three, Why we are here, and Who makes our recovery possible.**

As we read the Third Step Prayer, we each have the opportunity to reaffirm that decision by joining in during the reading of the prayer.

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"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him:

'God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!'

We thought well before taking this step, making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him."

Let's now take ten minutes of silence to clear our minds and settle into the work ahead.

After the silence, _____ will open the space by reading the Set-Aside Prayer.

(Please pause for ten minutes, followed by:)

"God, we invite you into this room, to guide and direct each of us as we seek your truth. Please set aside, within each of us, that which would block us off from the Truth. Lay aside our prejudices about what we think we know about this process, this meeting, and our spiritual condition. Remove our fears, that we may hear Your Truth through the members of this group. Give us the strength and courage to share Your Truth with each other in a real spirit of Love and Compassion for our fellow ...Amen"

AFTER WE SHARE OUR CURRENT CONDITION

After each person has shared their current condition, we'll go around the room—starting to the left—and offer reflections. These are not critiques or corrections. They're observations, posed as questions, are designed to open the door to deeper clarity.

We will receive **considerations**. They're usually framed with questions like, *"Is it possible that...?"* or *"Could it be that...?"* This language helps us stay open and curious, rather than reactive or defensive.

Each member is encouraged to bring a notebook to capture anything that resonates with or stirs something within them. These reflections aren't meant to be debated or explained. We receive them with openness, take them into personal meditation, and let Spirit guide us in what to do with them.

There is no need to defend or justify ourselves. In fact, we don't. That's part of the practice. We listen, take notes, and trust that what's meant for us will rise to the surface in time.

Over the days or weeks that follow, we reflect on what was offered and begin to work with whatever felt real or revealing. That reflection becomes the foundation for the next month's share.

When we meet again, we begin by speaking to what came up in meditation around the previous session's considerations, and what, if anything, we've done differently since. From there, we move into a new 10-minute check-in, using the guided reflection questions to help us orient and speak with clarity.

During your 10 minutes of sharing, you should comment **specifically** on where you are CURRENTLY in the following areas:

1. The Circle and Triangle (Recovery, Unity, Service)

- Where are you specifically in your Program of Recovery (Steps)?
- Where are you in Unity & Fellowship, which is the interaction with other AA's (Traditions)?
- Where are you in Service, which is the giving back and contributing, inside or outside of AA? (Concepts)

2. Prayer and Meditation

- Have I been showing up daily for spiritual practice, even when I don't feel like it?
- How many days have I done evening review or morning meditation since our last meeting?
- Am I using my evening review to inform my morning vision, or just checking boxes?
- How is my relationship with God?
- What specific things am I doing to deepen and broaden my relationship with God?
- Have I been praying for others, or only for myself?
- Have I been praying with loved ones or inviting spiritual connection into my relationships?

3. AA Engagement

- How many meetings have I attended since we last met?
- Am I part of a home group and showing up with consistency?
- Am I of service to my AA group? (coffee, cleanup, speaking, group officer)
- Am I of service to those OUTSIDE of AA? (work, family, friends)
- Do I have other people in my life who hold me spiritually accountable?
- Do I have a sponsor? Am I actively engaged, honest, and accountable to them?
- Am I a sponsor? Am I present, available, and trustworthy in that role?

4. Relationships

- How am I treating people in my daily life? (friends, fellows in AA, coworkers, strangers in traffic, etc.)
- Have I been short, sarcastic, easily angered, dismissive, irritable, or avoidant?
- Am I frequently having to apologize for what I've done?
- Am I obsessing over what I don't have, or practicing gratitude for what I do?
- Have I been respectful with other people's boundaries and belongings?

5. Home Life

- How is the energy in my home right now? Is it steady, reactive, avoidant, or volatile?
- Have I been kind, patient, present, and emotionally available to the people I live with?
- Have I needed to make amends lately? Have I raised my voice, slammed doors, broken things, used sarcasm, withdrawn affection, or created tension through silence or passive control?
- Have I been in arguments, power struggles, or cycles of resentment with my partner, children, or family?
- Does my behavior reflect the intimacy I say I want? Is there connection or just routine, avoidance, or performance?
- If I'm in a sexual relationship, is it mutual, connected, and honest? Is it strained, avoidant, transactional, or unspoken? Would your partner agree with your opinion of this?
- Am I acting out sexually through pornography, masturbation, fantasy, withholding, or affairs?
- Am I using sex to escape, control, or numb out? Have I been honest about that?
- Am I cultivating meaningful connections or using other people to manage loneliness or discomfort?

6. Career, Work, or School

- How are things at work, school, or in my career?
- Am I doing what I said I would do, on time and with integrity?
- Am I having problems with my boss or co-workers? Am I being short, grumpy, or passive-aggressive?
- How am I doing with my money? Do I have enough to pay my bills? Am I overspending?
- Am I honest with myself about debt, spending, or giving? Am I avoiding opening my mail?

7. General Well-Being

- How is my physical health? Am I eating, moving, or resting with intention? Am I exercising my body and my mind?
- Do I keep my word to others and to myself? Am I where I say I will be? Am I on time?
- Where has my self-will/ego manifested itself lately? (judgement, fear, control, blame, manipulation, martyrdom)
- Am I open to learning from others, or am I stuck in proving, defending, or dismissing?
- Where has fear or pride recently blocked me from taking necessary action?