

Adapted 4'33" (practice)

Our teachers: We have adapted this practice from John Cage's musical composition *4'33"*²⁷ and applied the principles of "being with the quiet," a phrase we learned from Millet Israeli.²⁸

Time: 4 minutes and 33 seconds

What it's good for: This exercise allows us to become aware of ourselves, centering us in our bodies in the space before speaking.

How it works:

The facilitator guides the group through the following steps, saying aloud:

1. We are going to sit in silence for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, to honor the work of John Cage, an artist who had a great impact on experimental sound in the 1950s until this day. He created a work called *4'33"* in 1952 which asked a musician to sit at a piano and not play the piano (or make any sound) for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. The sounds of the room become the work itself. John Cage asks, "What is a quiet mind? A mind which is quiet in a quiet situation."²⁹

2. During the next 4 minutes and 33 seconds, you can focus on your breathing, or listen to the room, or simply lie down and do nothing. Please do not eat, use your phone, sleep, or otherwise distract yourself from the practice of "being with the quiet."

3. Find a place in the room to lie down, sit, or otherwise be in a comfortable position.

4. We will start the practice now (set a timer for 4 minutes and 33 seconds).

5. (When the timer rings) That ends the practice. Know that silence is always available to you. May you carry your ability to be present with silence throughout the day.

6. John Cage says, "Silence, more than sound, expresses the various parameters (including those parameters which we have not yet noticed)."³⁰

27 John Cage Trust, "4'33'" 2016, http://johncage.org/4_33.html

28 Millet Israeli, *Certain Losses: contemplations on life and loss, grief and resilience*, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://certainlosses.com/>

29 John Cage, "Sixty Answers to Thirty-Three Questions from Daniel Charles," *For the Birds*, (Boston: Marion Boyers Publishers, 1981), p. 20.

30 Ibid.

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