

Lively

To be lively is to be vivacious in some sense. You can have flashing teeth and a Colgate smile, and yet not be vivacious. The trick is to have the life inside, under the smile. You're happy? That'll get you there. We'll all see it. We'll feel good for a minute, because you feel good. Of course it's not that simple. If you're happy for a reason I know, and that reason is one that makes me unhappy, I may still appreciate your vivacious laugh, but I may have inner feelings about it. The inner feelings matter, but they're not the main point. The main point is that, even with those inner feelings, I'm appreciating your liveliness.

Examples

1 A lively person is often stimulating to others. When I am lively I am interesting to other people. But indirectly. I often talk too much. I will sit over lunch with Jim and tell him at length about the writing I'm doing now, about the sense of inwardness in human experience. He'll smile and un-uh, and I'll be thinking, wow he's really fascinated by what I'm working on, and then the next day I'll find out that he didn't exactly hear a word of what I was saying, but that he'd gotten a lot out of our conversation for his own new essay book on the history of molecular biology. *Je sème à tout vent.*

2 I grow lively when I hear salsa music or Lagos high life. I want to act out. If I hear high life in a public place I am likely to perform. This is a grotesque example. I am quite old and quite uncoordinated on the dance floor. But it's a kind of liveliness. I persist in it, though my wife is agonized. I don't know where this comes from. I'm crazy about life.