

Sociable

The social person is comfortable in the presence of others, doing what he can to help or fit in with them. Being sociable is easier if one has been raised among siblings or extended family, for, though all is not roses in every family garden, familiarity with humans in groups is good practice in mature social living. There are, of course, many varieties of sociable being: ranging from the gregarious old-boy slap on the back version through the savvy and insightful student of human nature, like Montaigne, for whom 'there is nothing to which Nature hath more addressed us than to societie,' and for whom friendship is the culmination of social pleasures.

Examples

1 Lunch

I have become more sociable, as I become more conscious of what I have to contribute and learn. It took me a long time—50 years?—to even approach this consciousness, and it has taken me another 20 to learn how to exercise it. My very late in life investment of sociability reaches its peak in my lunches with guy friends. Once, sometimes twice, a week I sit down for an hour and a half and a good lunch, with old or new friend. Conversation, among guys past sixty who have worked at life a bit, is likely to be a piece of cake. One enters at any point—the guy's kids and the family's health are sure entry portals—and from there the segues fall like leaves from the trees: the school system, local government, an upcoming election and of course, if you share a background like University life, the famed laments at how bad things have gotten.

2 Senior citizen

As an active and ambitious senior, I like to do my writing work around people. (Solitude can also produce rich plants, but needs to be enjoyed in limited doses.) In Paris I might spend my afternoons at the Café de Flore, in Athens at Zonar's, but in Cedar Rapids I take my laptop to the Barnes and Noble café. What a buzz of innocuous humanity! What a burble of gossip, chit chat, coffee and cookies ordering! I take my seat at the large glass window, overlooking the parking lot, and continue writing the thoughts I parked a couple of hours earlier at home. They are always the same, though I change, and though the world changes. Thoughts are probes of the lasting. I appreciate the innocent historicity of the people around me, such good natured reminders of my own half-baked efforts, to make time stand still.