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► **To cite this version:**

Nicolas Pellerin, Éric Raufaste. Deliberate Practice of Wisdom: engaging the Serene path to Authentic-Durable Happiness. 9th European Conference on Positive Psychology (ECP), Jun 2018, Budapest, Hungary. 2018. hal-03142544

**HAL Id: hal-03142544**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03142544>**

Submitted on 16 Feb 2021

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Poster · June 2018

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.35543.52649

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# Deliberate Practice of Wisdom: engaging the Serene path to Authentic-Durable Happiness

Wisdom and happiness are notoriously linked (Zacher & Staudinger, 2018). How does it work? We proposed that Serenity could mediate this relationship. Some direct negative effects were found and we supposed that having a deliberate practice of Wisdom could prevent one from them. Finally, we tested whether this practice could foster all of these constructs.

## Wisdom

### ▲ Self-Transcendent Wisdom

Capacity of "seeing through the illusion" of foolishness. Is characterized by **Self-Knowledge**, **Self-Integration**, **Self-Transcendence** and **Non-Attachment** (Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin & Shiraishi, 2005; Curnow, 1999; McKee & Barber, 1999).

### ▼ Foolishness

Parasitic processing arising from rationality and opposed to Wisdom. Characterized by *self-deception* and *biased knowledge of reality and one-self*. It is very close with self-centeredness functioning (Vervaeke & Ferraro, 2013).

## Happiness

### ▲ Authentic-Durable Happiness (A-DH)

characterized by the *feeling of being in harmony* and *emotional stability*. Is durable by nature and grounded on a **selfless functioning** (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011).

### ▼ Fluctuating Happiness

characterized by *afflictive affects* and *hedonic principle*. Is fluctuating in nature and grounded on a **self-centered functioning** (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011).

### ► Serenity

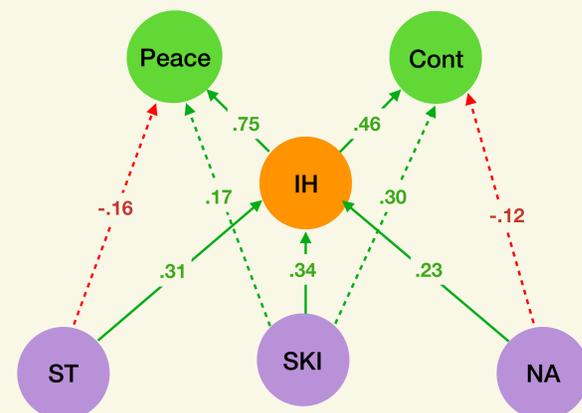
defined as an internal force which allows one to be serene in the face of adversity (Roberts & Cunningham, 1990). Can be represented in particular by the capacity to contact one's internal **Inner Haven**, and a pervasive **Acceptation** of "what is".

### ► Deliberate Practice of Wisdom

Inspired by the expertise literature, we asked people if they were engaged in a **deliberate practice** (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993) associated with an internal self-development approach (e.g., meditation, prayer... ) in the context of the second study.

## Study 1 : from Self-Transcendent Wisdom to Authentic-Durable Happiness

**H1. Serenity** mediates the positive relationship between **Self-Transcendent Wisdom** and **Authentic-Durable Happiness (A-DH)**.



**FIGURE 1** – Mediation of the effects of Wisdom on Happiness through Serenity. Non-significant relationships and correlations between elements of the same colors are not presented. SKI = Self-knowledge and Integration, ST= Self-Transcendence, NA=Non-Attachment, IH=Inner Haven, Cont=Contentment.

### Participants & Method :

1031 participants responded to an online survey including French versions of Happiness (i.e., SA-DHS), Self-Transcendent Wisdom (i.e., ASTI) and Serenity (i.e., Inner Haven) scales. SEM models and bootstrapped mediation analyses were computed with the "lavaan" package for R.

### Results :

According to H1, significant mediations of the effects of **Wisdom** on **A-DH** by **Serenity** were found (Fig 1). Surprisingly, controlling for Serenity revealed **negative direct effects** of ST on Peace and of NA on Contentment.

## Study 2 : the role of deliberate practice in wisdom acquisition

**H2.** Individuals who have a sustained **deliberate wisdom practice** (Group C) do not present **directs negatives effects**.

**H3.** The **experience in this deliberate practice** positively predicts **Wisdom**, and thus **Serenity** and **Happiness**.

### Participants & Method :

838 participants fully responded to the same survey as study 1 (adding Acceptation items). Additionally, we asked people if they were engaged in a self-development approach and whether they had an associated deliberate practice. We estimated the total amount of hours of practice for all practitioners.

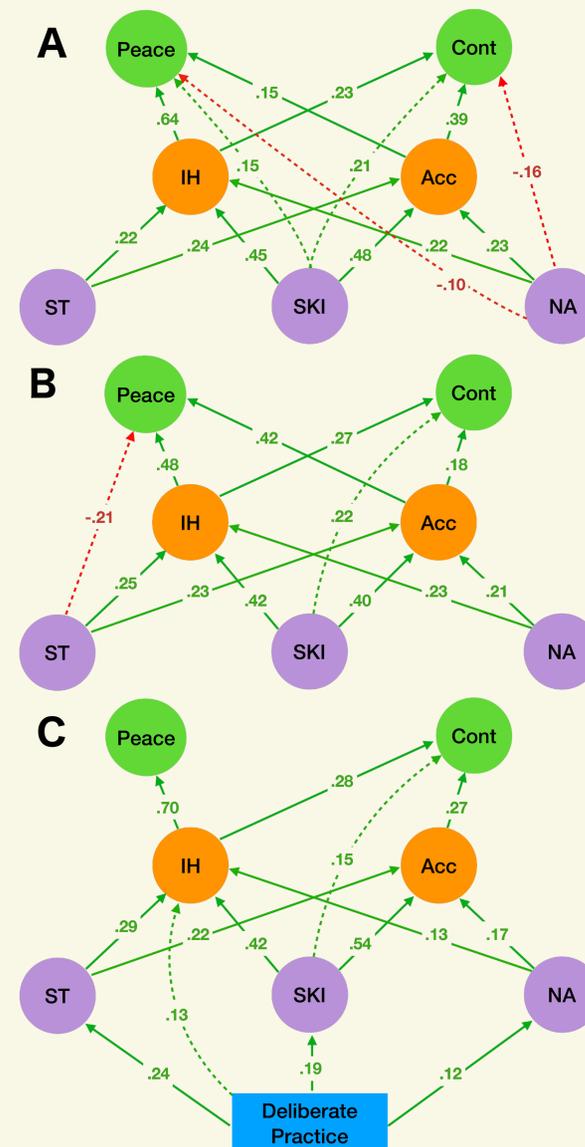
**Results :** First, with the full sample, the results of study 1 were replicated with the same paradoxical effects.

Then we present the results pertaining to all groups :

**Group A :** People having no self-development approach ( $N = 351$ ) presented a **direct negative effect** of NA on both dimension of A-DH.

**Group B :** People with a self-development approach ( $N = 156$ ) without any deliberate practice presented a **direct negative effects** of ST on Peace.

**Group C :** Finally, in agreement with H2, the deliberate practitioners ( $N = 331$ ) only presented positive relationships (full mediations). Moreover, in agreement with H3, the **amount of experience in a deliberate practice** directly predicted **Wisdom** and indirectly **Serenity** and **A-DH**.



**FIGURE 2** – Mediation of the effects of Wisdom on Happiness through Serenity for each group. Acc=Acceptation.

## Discussion

**The Serene path :** Wisdom had an impact on A-DH through increasing Serenity. By providing the capacity to overcome their Foolishness, Wisdom permit people to tap into their Inner Haven and to accept what they encounter in life. This inner strength allows Peace and Contentment to flourish.

**Paradoxical effects :** We found two types of paradoxical effects. 1) NA could be either secure (merely detachment from social and materials purposes) or insecure (indifference or mistrust against others); 2) ST items could be responded identically either with a cognitive ("I know that I'm part of the all") or an experiential ("I often *feel* that I'm part of the all") framework. Non-practitioners could prefer the cognitive framework, and this can be counterproductive to A-DH states.

**Deliberate Practice :** Practicing wisdom showed to be important : 1) by experiencing some degree of Wisdom, practitioners prevent themselves from the negative effects; 2) the amount of practice predicts an improvement of Wisdom, and thus of Serenity and A-DH states.

## Conclusion

**Wisdom** fosters **Authentic-Durable Happiness** by allowing **Serenity** to flourish, and **deliberate practice** could play an important role in the improvement of all these positive mental forces.

Future research should investigate what could constitute the best ways to practice Wisdom according to individual predispositions.

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