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If the world of coaching is represented as a tree, philosophy is its taproot, a straight tapering root that forms a center from which other roots sprout. According to James Mannion (2006) in his book, *Essential Philosophy: The Basic Concepts of the World’s Greatest Thinkers*, philosophy means love of wisdom and derives from the ancient words Philos (love) and Sophia (wisdom).

According to Wikipedia, “at one time most of the professions existing today were the province of philosophy, which is the foundation upon which all other fields of thought are based. Language is the principal tool of the philosopher and is the act of constantly improving one's understanding by means of thinking and dialogue.”

Coaching draws on various roots for its philosophical foundation. For example, Native American philosophy believes that everything is connected and humans are just one small part of the cosmic Big Picture. Like Heraclitus, a philosopher who predates Socrates, they believe that the cycle of life is one of constant change, although not chaotic or meaningless change. Everything is happening for a purpose and we are here on this earth to learn. The optimum conditions for learning require a balance of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our nature. Achieving your maximum human potential is the goal.

In every culture the sages, the wise elders have used the process of asking questions and drawing out of the individual what their best answers are, their personal wisdom. According to Richard Leider and David Shapiro (2002), authors of *Repacking Your Bags: Lighten the Load for the Rest of Your Life*, coaches in Africa are the elders sitting around the fire. Coaching, rather than being an exclusively new perspective could be more correctly seen as a return to the simpler philosophy of ‘primitive cultures.’


Werner Erhard, who popularized transformation and personal growth in the 1970s, has stated “great coaching is about leaving people with more power, more freedom, and more peace of mind.”