

What informs coaching theory?



micro article
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“... the effectiveness of what we do depends in large measure on our beliefs in human potential.”

(John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance**)

Coaching as a discipline has its theoretical foundations rooted in applied psychology. In applied psychology, psychological principles are applied to the experience of human life with a desire to find a way forward.

For the coach, knowledge and application of psychological principles can help inform their understanding of human behaviour and how to interact with the human processes which people go through when in the process of attempting change.

However, it's not just psychology which informs the approach the coach takes. Taking a step back, it could be argued that it is actually philosophy which really underpins an individual's approach to coaching.

Coaching and philosophy

When talking of philosophy in this context, it's not about some form of abstract musing on the nature or place of existence. But it is, very practically, about being aware of the values and social perspectives which have come to inform your view of humans and their potential.

This philosophical grounding can helpfully (or unhelpfully) inform the coach's approach:

- **How does the client *know* their reality?** - Our experiences are filtered through our understanding and perception.
- **How does our own worldview impact our work with the coachee?** - If we believe all people have potential this will make a difference, right?
- **Is *knowing* really only a partial temporal state?** - Can we really know what we want (goals) or only what seems relevant now? What difference does this make?

Developing a coaching philosophy to help mould your choice of coaching psychology

So, perhaps before even beginning to look at psychological theory, the theoretical starting point for becoming a coach is to explore your own:

- Values
- Beliefs about the world
- Perspectives on people

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