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Collaborative Empiricism is one of the fundamental practices of cognitive therapy, and is the process where patient and the therapist form a team to discuss the patient's problems and goals. The role of the therapist is a co-investigator, not an expert. The participant and the therapist work together, to test the maladaptive thoughts by investigating. This process follows a science tradition. The therapist is to help the client understand his core schemas through Socratic questioning. This is useful in a variety of different conditions and can be used for anxiety or mild to moderate depression, and marriage counseling.

Beck noted that successful qualities found in a therapist working in a collaborative effort are warmth, genuineness, sincerity, openness, and empathy. Some tools used in collaborative empiricism are Socratic dialogue, and creating a daily thought record. For example Socratic dialogue is one technique in which the therapist works with the client to define the problem and to create an alternative storyline.

An example of collaborative empiricism in a hypothetical therapist client dyad would be a client concern with failing a class due to one incomplete assignment. In this situation the client is an undergrad college student who needs to finish an assignment worth 15% of her grade. The student tells the therapist that she is concerned that she is not going to have enough time to finish the assignment and will get a c in the class, and she would be devastated. In this situation the therapist and client would investigate these thoughts. Then the therapist would ask questions as to why the client feels the way she does, and then continue to ask questions about the class to test the hypothesis that she would get a C. For example the therapist would ask the client her current grade, how she did on previous papers and

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other opportunities to increase her grade. Then ask the client what it would mean if she did get a C in the class. Then the therapist would work with the client to find the underlying distress the client feels to release the core schema and determine the underlying problem through recording automatic thoughts in a daily thought record.