

## **Using a Therapeutic Light Box for seasonal worsening of depressive and anxiety symptoms:**

Patients who note a worsening in their mood and anxiety symptoms during the Fall and Winter months in Michigan often ask about the use of 'light therapy' to help reduce their symptoms and improve their functioning. The following are some guidelines and specifications for the type of light box to use; we strongly encourage you to discuss the possibility of adding this to your treatment plan with your psychiatrist/psychiatric nurse practitioner before investing in a light box, especially if you have Bipolar Spectrum mood disorder symptoms.

### **Specifications to look for in a device:**

- **It is called a Therapeutic Light Box (rather than a 'happy lamp')**
- **The bulb should be rated as 10,000 Lux intensity**
- **The bulb should be listed as a Full Spectrum light source**

Devices can be found online, directly from distributors or from shopping sites such as Amazon.com.

### **How to use your therapeutic light box:**

- The light box should only be used in the morning! Using it throughout the day, or in the afternoon/evening can lead to insomnia/sleeplessness. Best results come from using it as regularly as possible.
- The light box is ideally used for up to 30-60 minutes; it is not advised to leave it on all day (again due to risk of sleep disturbance)
- The light box should be situated about 18-24 inches from your face. It isn't necessary to stare into it, but it does need to be angled towards your eyes, and your eyes have to be open for the light waves to enter.
- It is most effective when used during Daylight Savings Time, from early November through the first week or so of March. Many patients find it useful beginning even in October.