

# BrainWeighve App User Manual

(updated November 12, 2023)

The **BrainWeighve** app treats the underlying cause of your overeating, which is situations in your life that you cannot face yet you cannot avoid (i.e., stress) or are frustrated with. Nervous energy builds up in your brain to either deal with or avoid the situation, and this brain energy overflows or is “displaced” to your feeding drive, causing you to overeat. It’s a normal part of your brain that goes off the rails, like out of whack brain waves. So, it’s not your fault, and you can learn to manage it and reduce your weight. The app helps you identify the situations in your life that you cannot face or avoid or are frustrated with. Then it helps you create *Action Plans* to deal with each one. This stops the overflow brain energy production. Also, you will learn to rechannel the overflow brain energy to non-harmful displacement behaviors, like deep breathing, shooting hoops, or hobbies.

## How It Works

The app helps you deal with both immediate and ongoing difficult life situations and resulting eating urges. You enter your difficult life situations in the app’s *Dread List*, which helps you identify these situations, and then the app helps you to create *Action Plans* for each one. This should stop the build-up of overflow nervous energy in your brain, and the displacement mechanism, which causes you to overeat, likewise should stop firing. For in-the-moment, immediate stressful situations with eating urges, you should tap the *Rescue* button. The *Rescue* area asks you what is bothering you the most in your life, at that moment, and then helps you come up with an *Action Plan*.



## Daily Check-In

The app wants you to check-in daily, which should require only about 15 minutes. Each day, the app will present you with a different task list, like

weigh-in, check-in on your *Dread List*, or *Rechanneling*. The app also asks you to say whether you've snacked that day and how much you've eaten at mealtimes, as dealing with your *Dread List* items should help you to stop snacking and eat less at meals without a lot of willpower.

## **Setting Up the App**

When you first open the app, it asks you to go through the help texts which explain the various parts of the app. Then, you will see the homescreen with a list of seven setup icons and flashing red exclamations points. The red exclamation points tell you that a task needs attention, and a green check mark says it's done. Once you set up each icon, it will disappear from the list.

## **Starting Weight**

Tap the weigh-in icon on the homescreen to input your starting weight. Select Entry Method, either manual or wireless entry. If you're using a wireless scale, Bluetooth should show a green dot beside On and Connection Paired. Then, stand straight up on the scale, and your weight will automatically appear on the app screen. The app wants you to take a photo of your feet on the scale once a week. The scale battery level will also be shown. Tap save, and your weight will appear on your chart and on the homescreen progress graph.

## **Dread List**

Next tap the *Dread List* setup icon. Your *Dread List* is where you input situations in your life that you cannot easily face but you cannot avoid, or that you are frustrated with. Try to be open and honest, so that the app can help you. If you're not sure what to input, tap on "I need ideas on situations," and you will see a list of possible situations you may be having difficulty with, like school or bullying. These were shared by other teens in the app study. Tap a situation, and it will appear in the situation textbox. Then create a plan to deal with that situation. Again, you may put in your

own plan, or you may select “I need ideas on plans” to see a list of example plans. Each example plan has a description and an option, “Use this plan.” Then tap “Save.”

## **Anonymous Sharing**

A message then pops up asking whether you would like to anonymously share your ideas with other teens using this app. This is purely voluntary, but it might help other teens to know what situations you are having difficulty with and how you are solving this. They, in turn, might help you by sharing their situations and ideas. You may opt out of your choice at any time by going to Settings on the Orange Page (three yellow horizontal bars in upper left corner of homescreen).

## **Triggers**

Next, tap on the *Triggers* setup icon. Besides dreaded situations, *Triggers* also are things that cause the displacement mechanism in your brain to fire, so you get an urge to eat, even though you’re not really hungry. There are 4 types of *Triggers*: 1) Hooks, 2) Problem Foods, 3) Food Sensations, and 4) Celebrations. Your coach will enable one or more trigger types for you to work on.

## **Hooks**

On the *Triggers* set up page, tap *Hooks*, if enabled. Certain things called Hooks can trigger a craving for food or urges to eat, like walking past a bakery or McDonald's, or going into the kitchen. It's easier to avoid the trigger for food than to avoid the food when it's in front of you. In the upper box, enter a new hook to avoid, and you can tap “I need ideas,” such as junk food in my house. Then you type your plan to avoid the hook. Again, the app can give you ideas for a plan.

## **Problem Foods**

Then, go back to the triggers setup page and tap on *Problem Foods*, if enabled. These are foods that typically are highly pleasurable, like junk food and also certain foods at meals, with the following characteristics: 1) you have cravings for the food and seek it out, 2) you can't resist the food when it's in front of you or close by, and 3) you can't stop eating it once you start. Then, list a food that you have a particular problem with and will withdraw from. As always, the app will give you ideas if you need them. You will avoid eating that food for a minimum of 10 days and until cravings for the food resolve. Then, you will pick another food to withdraw from. It helps to take a photo of the food or choose a photo from the app's problem food library.

## **Food Sensations**

Go back to the *Triggers* setup page and tap on *Food Sensations*, if enabled. *Food Sensations* are the taste and texture of food, such as being sweet, salty, creamy, crunchy, or chewy, which make you want to eat more of the food. *Food Sensations* may be from additives like sugar and salt or how the food is cooked, like fried that makes it crunchy. In the app, enter either a texture of food or a food additive that you will withdraw from. The app will give you ideas. Similar to problem foods, you will avoid eating that type of textured food or food additive for 10 days and until your cravings for it resolve.

## **Celebrations**

Go back to the triggers setup page and tap on *Celebrations*, if enabled. *Celebrations* are events where overeating may happen, and this may displace background stress. *Celebrations* include holidays, customs, an anniversary or birthday, and accomplishments like graduation or job promotion, or any event where you feel happy or when people get together. In the app, describe a social gathering situation or accomplishment that you are happy about. Then, write a plan for this situation, so that you won't overeat when it happens. The app will give you ideas, like how to celebrate without food.

## Daily Check-In

Each day you will check-in on the *Triggers* that have been enabled. Once you have withdrawn from one trigger type, such as problem foods, you will select a new item of that same trigger type, like a different problem food, and go through withdrawal for it as you did with the last one

## Rechanneling

Go back to the homescreen and tap on Rechanneling setup. Eating urges and cravings may be briefly relieved by you by rechanneling the displacement overflow mental energy to a non-food displacement activity, while you work on the life situation. Type non-food activities that you will use to rechannel the displacement of eating, such as taking deep breaths or hobbies. Rechanneling activities are sort of like distractions, and the Distractions Jar in the app is a place where you may add distractions to help you avoid giving into an urge to eat. The difference between distractions and rechanneling activities is that distractions may not use up overflow mental energy. For example, watching TV is a distraction but does not use up overflow mental energy and won't help you with an urge to eat. Doing something that engages your mind, like drawing a picture or shooting hoops will use up overflow mental energy. These are thus rechanneling activities that will help you avoid giving into an urge to snack, and the app also will give you rechanneling ideas.

## Eating Area

Go back to the homescreen and tap on the *Eating* area setup icon. Here you will set up snacking and mealtime amounts reduction strategies and then check in each day to report how each are going.

## Snacking

Tap on the Snacking setup icon. When you deal with your dreaded situations and triggers or re-channel your overflow brain energy to a non-food displacement, this should decrease your urges to snack. The idea is to stop snacking completely, no eating between meals at all. In our previous studies, 8 out of 10 of the participating teens were able to stop snacking completely (for the entire day). The app has displacement strategies to help you stop snacking that you may select.

## Mealtime Amounts

Tap on the Eating setup icon. When you deal with your dreaded situations and triggers or re-channel your overflow brain energy to a non-food displacement, this also should decrease the amounts that you want at mealtimes. The idea is to gradually decrease the amounts you eat at meals. Typically, teens in our previous studies decreased their mealtime amounts to about half of what they were eating at the start of the study, in order to lose significant weight. The app has displacement strategies to help you decrease mealtime amounts that you may select.

## Alerts

A green checkmark will appear on an icon once you have set up an area, like *Eating*, and the next day the icon will appear on the check-in list and will have a red exclamation mark on it, indicating a check-in is required.

## Rescue

Go back to the homescreen and tap on the red and white *Rescue* setup icon (not the orange and black *Rescue* button). The *Rescue* area helps you deal with a bothersome urge to eat, or if you've given in to a bothersome urge and regret it. To help you resist a bothersome urge to eat in the future, type what happened the last time you gave in to a bothersome urge to eat and if you regretted giving in. Type how you felt after giving in. You may

input more than once that you gave in. This will form your regrets list, which you may read in the future when you have a bothersome urge to eat and will help you resist giving in. If you do give in to that urge, you can add how you felt to your regrets list.

The Rescue area is designed to quickly help you in the moment. The *Rescue* button is prominently placed on the homescreen, but you may drag the button to wherever it's most easy for to find, so you can quickly open the app and tap the *Rescue* button. You then select whether you have a bothersome urge to eat or have given into an urge.

### **What Do You Need Rescuing From**

The Rescue Area asks, "What Do You Need Rescuing From?" Choices are "I have a bothersome urge to eat" or "I gave into an eating urge or temptation and I regret it." Please describe what you need to be rescued from. Then tap the arrow to the right, ">", of what you described, and it will take you to where you may work on it.

### **Bothersome Urge to Eat**

If you have a bothersome urge to eat, first the Rescue area asks you to rechannel the resulting overflow energy in your brain to a non-harmful activity, such as shooting hoops, so you can temporarily avoid the urge to eat and work on the life situation that's causing it. A distraction that you come up with may also help this. Second, the Rescue area asks you "What's the main thing in your life that is bothering you right now, or when you overate?" That thing or situation is what your brain displaces by eating. The app then helps you come up with an *Action Plan* to deal with that life situation, so your brain will stop creating overflow energy. The situation, your rechanneling activity, and your action plan will next appear as a flashing link in the middle of the app's homescreen, so it's immediately available to you, on an ongoing basis.

## Take a Risk

At the bottom of your Rescue plan summary there's a link to **Take a risk**. When you create your Rescue plan to resist the urge to eat, putting it in motion requires that you take a risk that the urge will still continue, be unbearable, and wear you down. Realize that if that happened you could deal with it, but the chances of it happening are actually pretty small. Then go about your life.

## Action Plans

Just identifying your stressful situation should give some stress relief, and your urge to eat may lessen. Coming up with an *Action Plan* to deal with the situation should produce a lot more relief, and your urge to eat may lessen a lot more as well. Relaxing and continuing to focus on your *Action Plan* should keep the urge at bay, so you can then go about your life without needing a lot of willpower. The app also stores your *Rescue* stressful situation in your *Rescue* history (top right corner of Rescue page) and also in your *Dread List*, so you may continue to work on it, should you need to.

## Given in to an Urge to Eat

If you select that you've given in to an urge to eat and regret it, the app will straight away ask you what you might do for "damage control." This is how you might undo some of the weight gain resulting from giving in to the urge, like eating half what you normally eat for 2 days to make up for the extra calories. Also, the app helps you plan how you might prevent giving-in from happening again in the future.

The app then asks you to think back about what was happening in your life at the time when you gave in. The app helps you identify the main thing in your life that was bothering you when you gave in to the urge and come up with an *Action Plan* to help prevent overeating in the future if the same situation happens again.



## Take a Risk

Like with a bothersome urge, again at the bottom of your Rescue plan summary there's a link to **Take a risk** that the urge will still continue, be unbearable, and wear you down.

## Regrets List

Then the app will ask if you want to add your gave-in situation to your Regrets List. Therefore, if a similar urge or temptation happens again in the future, you may read your Regrets List to help motivate you to not give in.

## Immediate Stress vs. Background Stress

The *Rescue* button will help you in the moment deal with an immediate stressful situation, including an urge to eat, or it will help if you've given in to an urge and regret it. The main part of the **BrainWeighve** app will help you deal with ongoing background stress, like school or a job, and resulting displacement overeating. For this ongoing stress, you will check-in each day on your *Dread List*, *Triggers*, and *Rechanneling*. You also will report whether you've snacked that day and whether you've eaten less at mealtimes, just to keep track of how the app is helping you.

## Helpful Resources

Other helpful areas of the app include Carly's Corner, the Coach area, the Distractions Jar, and the Self Esteem area.

- **Carly's Corner** is a collection of videos on different topics related to weight loss and the BrainWave app, such as Displacement, Motivation, Boredom, Bullying, Triggers, Openness, Slip Ups, and Shame. These videos were created by Carly Hurt, a 20-year-old girl, who has used the **BrainWeighve** app for her own weight loss.

- **The Distractions Jar** is a place where you may add distractions to help you avoid giving into an urge to eat. Distraction ideas shared by other teens, who've used the app, are also available to you.
- **The Self Esteem** area is where you type your Strengths, your Support People, and your Story. For your Story, just type something about your efforts to lose weight and how you came to use this app or be in the clinical trial.
- **The Coach** area is where you send and receive secure messages to and from your coach.

We hope the **BrainWeighve** app is useful to you for losing weight. Good luck!