

BrainWeighve App User Manual

(updated June 25, 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 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 are frustrated with, and 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 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 each 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 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 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 feeling sad, or 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 on the food. 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, or 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 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, or until your cravings for it resolve.

Celebrations

Go back to the triggers setup page and tap on *Celebrations*, if enabled. *Celebrations* are events that our society or culture sets up to allow overeating to 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. Eating urges and cravings may be briefly relieved by you by rechanneling the food 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

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

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 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/white *Rescue* setup icon (not the orange/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. It's 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 select whether you have a bothersome urge to eat or have given into an urge.

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. 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 on the app’s homescreen, so it’s immediately available to you, on an ongoing basis.

Take a Risk

At the bottom of your Rescue summary there is 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 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 *Rescued* 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 to think back about what was happening in your life at the time when you gave in. The app helps you identify what was going on and come up with an *Action Plan* to help prevent overeating in the future if the same situation happens again. You also may do damage control and undo some of the result of giving in to the urge, like eating half what you normally eat for 2 days to make up for the extra calories.

Acute Stress vs. Chronic Stress

The *Rescue* button will help you in the moment deal with an acute stress situation including an urge to eat, or it will help if you've given in to an urge. In contrast, the main part of the **BrainWeighve** app is designed to help you deal with chronic daily background stress, like school, and ongoing displacement overeating. For this ongoing stress, you will check-in each day on your *Dread List*, *Triggers*, and *Rechanneling*. You also will say whether you've snacked and whether you've eaten less at mealtimes when you check-in, 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 and will serve as a consultant for the clinical trial with the app. You may ask Carly questions, and your coach will relay you questions to Carly, which she will answer.

- **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.
- **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 from your coach.

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