

MENTALLY STRONG

**7 Steps *to* Becoming
the Best Version *of* Yourself**

Freddy Sandoval

Mentally Strong

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To Kaleb and Micah:
So you know that
if you believe and turn your
thoughts into action,
you can achieve anything!

Endorsements

“I have known Freddy since we were both kids playing baseball in Tijuana, and I know he has always been a person that analyzes and takes the mental part of the game of baseball and puts it into play. Having worked with him during my professional career I know and understand how important it is to work on your mentality, not just in the game of baseball but in life. Freddy does an incredible job on this book taking his work and vision, and providing everyone with a very simple way to exercise the mind. The principles and steps of *Mentally Strong* will strengthen anyone’s mind and will lead anyone who reads it to individual success in sports and in life. This book is a difference-maker. Freddy congratulations, I am so proud of you and I know this book will help a lot of people when they read it. It will not only transform people’s mentalities, but also their lives.”

–**Adrian Gonzalez**, *15-year MLB career, 3-year LMP career*

“We all need first responders; a person with specialized training who is amongst the first to arrive and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency. At the lowest point of my life and professional career, that person became Freddy Sandoval. He arrived at my scene and explained how to apply the principles of this book. The principles that would change the outcome of my life. I experienced success both on and off the field overcoming my fears, anxiety, and discovering my self-worth. The principles which are now written in this book helped me overcome a third possible career-ending surgery and as a result leading me to have one of the best years as a pitcher in the Major Leagues. If you find yourself in need of a responder, I encourage you to read *Mentally Strong*. Its life changing principles will enable you to live a life with meaning and fulfillment.”

–**Jaime Garcia**, *Author and 10-year MLB career*

“I’ve been blessed to call Freddy my Mental Coach, but above all he is an incredible human being with an intense desire to impact as many people’s lives as possible. From the first day I met him, this book was a burning goal within his heart. As I read the book, I was so proud, because I knew it was the culmination of so many years of his personal journey, education, and passion to help others. As someone who has completed many steps of Freddy’s training on a personal level, I loved the accessibility and simplicity of the steps laid out in this book. Thank you, Freddy, for this amazing labor of love.”

–**Amy Thomas**, *Client and Hydrocephalus patient/advocate*

“Being in Professional baseball for over 30 years, I have experienced the mental challenges to be able to perform at a high level on a daily basis. I believe that building the mind is crucial to success. In *Mentally Strong*, Freddy provides mental training tools that are not only helpful to athletes, but for anyone who wants to improve in every area of life.”

–**Bobby Magallanes**, *Bench Coach for the Atlanta Braves*

“After reading *Mentally Strong*, I am now more convinced that the mental side of life and sports is fundamental to success. This book is a well-defined manual that gives you the step by step instruction and tools to find perfect balance between the mind and the body. Freddy has gotten to the highest level as an athlete and as a mental coach and this book is a unique piece. If you are a person looking to turn your goals into reality and to turn your life around, this is the perfect book for you. I highly recommend *Mentally Strong* to anyone, in any stage of life to help you reach your goals, transform your mindset and prolong your well-being. “

–**Jorge Campillo**, *5 year MLB career*

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Introduction

Ever since I can remember, I knew I wanted to become a professional baseball player. Growing up in Mexico, I wanted to play at the Major-League level in the United States, an accomplishment that very few Mexican players had achieved. To achieve this unique and crazy goal, I knew that I needed to have dedication, commitment, drive, and passion. And I knew I was going to sacrifice a lot of other things, such as family time and relationships with friends. However, for some time, my life and actions did not match up with my goals, and early in my career, my dream was derailed. It took a friend and an honest conversation for me to get back on track and finally start doing what I needed to do without excuses.

I owe a lot to this person because with a single conversation, he opened my eyes, and my life completely changed for the better. One conversation led me to start making better decisions and it was because I took action that I can now live the life I always wanted.

I've known Adrian Gonzalez since we were little kids. We met when we were only 4-5 years old, playing baseball in the fields of Liga Municipal de Tijuana. Although we were never teammates, we got to play together on some all-star teams through the years. Since then, we have been good friends, but I never realized *how* good of a friend he really was until one night in January of 2007.

I was drafted out of the University of San Diego by the Anaheim Angels in the 8th round of the 2004 First Year Major League Baseball draft. I was the 233rd pick overall, however, my professional career didn't start that year. I was drafted in 2004 but didn't play a single inning that year.

In 2004, the sport of baseball had restrictions as to how many visas each team could have for international players, and I didn't have a working visa that year. That same season, the Venados of Mazatlán selected me first overall in the Mexican Pacific League draft, but I ended up not joining the team the first year. Even though I had achieved the first step towards my goal of professional baseball, I had not yet played at all that first season.

Baseball has a unique system in which players who get drafted or who sign free-agent contracts go through the minor leagues to start their careers. It is in the minor leagues that players develop and hone their skills with the dream of making it to the big leagues. The system consists of different levels, where based on your talent and ability, you play with the hopes of playing at a high level while staying healthy. Most players start at the rookie-level, which can either be in the Dominican Republic, Arizona, or Florida, where the minor-league complexes are. There is no timeline as to how long you will play in each level because the organization's management is the one making decisions on your career. Based on your performance, they can either move you up to a different level, drop you down, or ultimately release you. The rookie level consists of two levels: rookie and advanced rookie. Next, is class single A, which also consists of two levels: class A and class A advanced. Then, if you are still healthy and performing well according to management's standards, you can be promoted to double-A. Lastly, triple-A is the last level before reaching the big leagues. As I mentioned before, there is no rule of

thumb as to how you advance through the system. Many players have skipped levels and reached higher grounds sooner than expected while other players' careers have ended sooner than anticipated.

In 2005, I finally experienced my first season as a professional baseball player. I played in class single-A in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where I had a good first season. Like life itself, it was full of ups and downs, but overall, I had a great season and I learned a lot. After the season, I headed down to Mazatlán, Mexico for the first time to continue developing as a player. In 2005, I had the opportunity to get my first Mexican Pacific League hit and also had the opportunity to be a part of a championship team.

In 2006, back in the United States, I was promoted to the single-A advanced team in Rancho Cucamonga, California. There, I had an okay season filled injuries and more ups and downs. Ultimately, though, it was an okay year. As I had done the previous year, after the season in the United States, I headed to Mazatlán to play Winter ball.

I say I headed to Mazatlán to play, but I rarely played. I was a rookie and I was sharing the field with players I admired and grew up watching. It was a great time for me to continue learning and developing as a player. In addition to playing a little, this is where I reconnected with my long-time friend Adrian Gonzalez.

The conversation that changed my life.

Adrian was already established in the Majors (U.S.) and came down to Mazatlán to continue crafting his skills and continue developing as a player in the Winter. It was the first season where I played more regularly in Mazatlán, but regardless of the stats and the accomplishments, my most important learning came after we beat Culiacan at home in Mazatlán during the semi-finals. After the game, the whole team

went out to celebrate at one of the local bars. We were waiting to hear who we would play in the Mexican Pacific League Championship.

As we were celebrating, I was sitting on a table with a lot of my childhood idols who were now my teammates. Amongst them was Adrian Gonzalez. Baseball players talk baseball so we were making assumptions as to who we would play in the championship and whatnot. The conversation led, as usual, to talking about the game we had just played. Even though I hadn't played, our team had beat Culiacan in a dramatic fashion so there was a lot of adrenaline running through our blood and a lot of situations to talk about.

Before I continue with this story, let me say that Adrian is one of the most knowledgeable baseball guys I have ever known in my life and that he loves to talk baseball. While he was talking about the game, there was a moment when he looked to me in regards to a situation that had happened during the game, and I was clueless. Even though I had been there, I had no idea what he was talking about. Adrian continued talking more about the game and it was almost as if I had not been there at all. As I mentioned before, I didn't play in that game, but I also didn't remember a thing about it. Despite the fact that I was physically there, I wasn't there mentally. It was at that point that Adrian must have noticed something in me and before I knew it, he and I were having a separate conversation.

In that moment, Adrian talked to me as a baseball player and a teammate, but most importantly, he talked to me as a friend. Adrian asked questions no one had ever asked me before. The initial things he asked were about me, not about baseball or about how my baseball career was going. Instead, they were questions about how I was doing in my personal life and eventually, as we talked into the early morning hours, the conversation led back to how I was approaching my baseball career.

Adrian asked me, do you work out? “Mmm, yeah.”

He followed up with, “How often?”

“Maybe two to three times a week,” I responded with shame and guilt because of two reasons: 1) I knew how dedicated Adrian is and 2) because internally, I was disappointed in myself.

His response shocked me and changed the way I would live my entire life from that point forward.

“What happened to you?” It wasn’t really a question. He cared enough to challenge me, and honestly, it couldn’t have come from a more impactful person. He continued, “What happened to you? You used to be way better than me growing up, and now you are partying and going out all the time, and not paying attention to your life and your career. I already made it to the big leagues, and you are in high A. Do you really want to make it to the big leagues?”

I want to clarify that Adrian wasn’t being arrogant or egocentric. Those of us that have the pleasure of knowing him know that he is the complete opposite. He is humble and loves to help people. On this particular occasion, that’s exactly what he was doing - he was helping me. The conversation brought me back to earth and as a friend, Adrian reminded me that I was not doing what I needed to do to achieve my goals and live the life I wanted to live. Minutes into the conversation, I started crying. Tears started coming down my face because I knew in my heart that what Adrian was telling me was the truth. As the old saying goes, “Sometimes the truth hurts.”

I remember clearly that as I was crying, I pushed my drink away. Adrian noticed and said, “Right now is about celebration. It’s okay to celebrate tonight, but if you truly want to achieve your goal and make it to the big leagues, you might want to consider changing your ways.”

This was the first time that someone had spoken to me like that - with heart, passion, and honesty. It hit home. Adrian talked to me about resilience, hard work, and commitment. Most importantly, he spoke about my character and changing my mentality. Over the next few days, our discussion continued, and Adrian pointed me in the right direction with workouts, meal plans, schedules, and routines. The rest is history.

That year, 2007, Venados of Mazatlán ended up losing game seven of the championship. It was a 1-0 game against Hermosillo. A few months later, back in the United States, I was once again promoted, this time to the double-A team. I headed to North Little Rock, Arkansas as a new man, with a renewed purpose, and with a stronger mentality. That year, I had great numbers, earning a place in the MLB Futures Game as well as receiving other personal awards. As I continued my transformation into a better life with a new mentality, in 2008 I was promoted to Triple-A in Salt Lake City, where I played and produced career-high numbers. I broke and tied some records and even earned the Anaheim Angels top honor, becoming Minor League Player of the Year. Then, on September 8th of the same year, 2008, my lifetime goal of reaching the big leagues became a reality.

To this day, I don't know what would have become of me if not for that incredible conversation with Adrian Gonzalez. I am thankful to him in a lot of ways, not just because he saw me at a low point in my life and had the right words to say to me, but because he planted the first seed in my mind about transformation. Most of my life, I was living and learning, making mistakes, failing, and being disappointed. Now, I approach life differently and each day I continue to learn, grow and become better at whatever it is that I am doing. I know each day comes with its own set of difficulties and challenges,

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but I am now more equipped to face those challenges with a strong mentality thanks to Adrian.

"A fifty percent effort,
will give you a fifty percent result."
Adrian Gonzalez

The Intent

Just as Adrian changed my way of thinking with a single conversation, I hope you read this book as if you are sitting down to talk with a friend. I want to provide you with the tools to change your way of thinking so you can live the life you want. With understanding and practical application, the tools and techniques I am going to introduce to you in this book will start a transformational change that will strengthen your mindset. A stronger mindset will lead you to live life with less tension and stress and maximize your potential.

The Approach

Read this book at your own pace understanding that each chapter is going to bring its own set of ideas, challenges, and ways of thinking. Take the time to grasp, process, and understand the information provided on each topic. Remember, this book is for you and the unique way that you apply the topics will directly influence your transformation.

The Program

After reading the book continue your journey with the 10-week Mentally Stronger Plan in the appendix. The proactive program will challenge you every week on one topic and one mentality. You are to work on each topic for one week to gain awareness, self-control, and, little by little develop a new habit. At the end of the 10 weeks, you will be well on your way to becoming the best version of yourself.

