

Jim Stynes' BIG MAN, BIG ISSUE

Melbourne AFL footballer Jim Stynes hasn't missed a game in 10 years. He's not the type to give up. He talks to Morph about hanging in there in life.

Melbourne footballer and Brownlow medallist Jim Stynes is not the sort of bloke that gives up easily. You don't play 10 years of AFL football without missing a game if you're not prepared to stick in there - no matter what. Judging by that effort he's the sort of guy that, if you were his team mate on the field and you were in a tight spot (like with Tony Lockett bearing down on you!), Jimmy would come through.

And when ruckman Jim's not protecting his little rover mates on the field, he's doing his best to help young people who are in a tight spot. Jim works for an organisation called Reach for the Stars which runs workshops and camps to help young people's self-development. He's also recently worked with the Suicide Prevention Taskforce which has tried to get at some of the reasons why so many young people decide to give up on life.

Though he's worked for a number of years with young people who've thought about suicide, Jim says the problem really hit home for him when some people close to him struggled with it.

"I've had some friends who went through some tough issues in their lives and seriously thought about it," Jim said, looking through a black eye from the weekend's game, when *Morph* talked to him earlier this year. "That really made me wake up a bit and think, this problem is right on our doorstep."

"There's something inside us, past the physical form, that's far greater. And when we acknowledge that, it opens up the possibility that things do happen for a reason"

- Jim Stynes

If you've read anything about suicide before - or if you've had anything to do with the issue - you'll know about the different things experts say to look out for in people (and ourselves): depression, sudden increase in drug and alcohol use, withdrawing from

careful how we use our language. It can have damaging effects. You only have to go to a football game to hear it," Jim said. And he'd know.

"I always found it hard to fit in. I suffered from being on the outside. I was frightened I wasn't quite good enough. But sport sort of crossed those barriers. Because I was good at sport I got a certain amount of respect from it."

- Jim Stynes on his school experience



Jim also thinks another reason why suicide is such a problem these days is that too many of us live as if we're the only people in the world. We often don't belong to anything bigger than ourselves, or believe in anything bigger than ourselves.

When Jim was on TV, a few days before he talked to *Morph*, he said that because people don't belong as much to groups like churches anymore, it could be a factor in high suicide rates. "I'm preaching a religion here, [but] human beings need to feel a sense of belonging. There's a very strong sense of belonging involved in being in a church group because there is a strong belief system."

"There's something inside us," Jim added, "past the physical form that's far greater. And when we acknowledge that, it opens up the possibility that things do happen for a reason. Things happen for a reason we can grow from adversity."

Jim said, if we believe that, it can put a different spin on hard times in our lives. "If your parents aren't getting along, or there's a divorce or even if we just lose a game - we can actually grow from experience rather than say, 'That's life's down the tubes. Once you believe in something that's greater than yourself it certainly helps you get through the tough times.'"

others and talking about suicide. While, as Jim said, these things don't necessarily mean someone is suicidal, they help us to recognise when things might be turning ugly for friends or ourselves.

But of course all these factors don't help us to know why someone would want to end their life. Jim reckons some of it has got to do with what we think of ourselves. He says the things people say about us can have a huge affect on whether we think life's worth living.

"There are a lot of people who tell young people they are not good enough, that they are unworthy, a disappointment. Or they are not like their younger sister or older brother, they'll never get into uni or you'll always be a dole bludger," Jim said.

Sound familiar? While we've probably all had things like that said to us, what Jim reckons is that if you hear that sort of stuff enough you start to believe it.

"We start to think, if that's what they keep telling me I am, I'll prove them right! We have to very

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