

Hawking: I would consider assisted suicide if I became a burden to those around me

By Hannah Furness
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STEPHEN HAWKING, the physicist and author, has said he would consider assisted suicide if he felt he had nothing more to contribute to the world and had become a burden.

Prof Hawking, 73; who has motor neurone disease, has argued that keeping someone alive against their wishes was the "ultimate indignity", and said he would consider assisted suicide in the event he was suffering great pain.

In a television interview with Dara O'Briain, Prof Hawking disclosed he suffered bouts of loneliness, because people were afraid to talk to him.

In 2013, he joined the debate on assisted dying, saying: "We don't let animals suffer, so why humans?"

Prof Hawking offered further insights into his own life, alongside interviews with his children. When



Hawking: 'People are afraid to talk to me or don't wait for me to respond'

asked about his support for assisted dying, and what condition he would have to be in to consider it for himself, he said: "To keep someone alive against their wishes is the ultimate indignity.

"I would consider assisted suicide only if I were in great pain or felt I had nothing more to contribute, but was just a burden to those around me."

But, he added: "I am damned if

I'm going to die before I have unravelled more of the Universe." He is not in pain, he said, but suffers occasional discomfort because he cannot adjust his own position.

O'Briain, a comedian and broadcaster who has a degree in theoretical physics, praised Prof Hawking for his "impressively honest answers, even to the most direct questions".

He also asked his subject, who communicates through a speech synthesiser, whether he ever finds life lonely.

"At times I get very lonely because people are afraid to talk to me or don't wait for me to write a response," he said. "I'm shy and tired at times. I find it difficult to talk to people I don't know."

When asked what he misses about being able-bodied, he said: "I would like to be able to swim again. When my children were young, I missed not being able to play with them physically."

The programme will also feature contributions from Lucy, his daughter, his youngest son Tim, and his Cambridge research students.

The full interview will be broadcast in *Dara O'Briain meets Stephen Hawking*, on BBC One on June 15.

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