To be effective in communicating with adult children, we need to strike a balance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abdicating</th>
<th>Consulting with love</th>
<th>Arbitrating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being aloof</td>
<td>Developing strategies <em>together</em></td>
<td>Overbearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for problems to develop</td>
<td>Achieving balance leading to interdependence</td>
<td>Dictating rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Listening with full attention &amp; reflecting feelings of the other</td>
<td>Too much advice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accentuating the positive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching correct principles &amp; letting them govern themselves</td>
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*Empty Nest Parenting, 258*

**Why develop good communication?** “Good communication helps prevent misunderstandings, provides needed information so that better decisions can be made, and can establish an atmosphere of cooperation and conciliation that is necessary for parent-adult children relationships to be the best they can be.” *Principles of Love, p. 93*

**When and how much to communicate?** Every family is different, but consulting together about how often to communicate is important to becoming interdependent. Some families send e-mails once a week and then talk on the phone once a week. Some families like a regular time each week to talk on the phone. Other families like to be more spontaneous, but talking about when to talk is very important to a happy parent/adult child relationship. Much interactive communication is needed at key times in an adult child’s development: first time leaving home, first full-time job, getting married, having first child.

**How to communicate?** “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood /or motherhood/, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile— Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be enemy. That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. . .” *(D&C 121:41-44)*

**What to communicate?** “I am asking that we stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight. I am suggesting that as we go through life we ‘accentuate the positive.’ I am asking that we look a little deeper for the good, that we still voices of insult and sarcasm, that we more generously compliment virtue and effort. I am not asking that all criticism be silenced.
Growth comes from correction. Strength comes of repentance... I am suggesting that we speak of one another’s virtues more than we speak of one another’s faults.”

Gordon B Hinckley, Ensign, April 1986, 4

**Specifics on what to communicate?** Below are some types of questions on which to consult with adult children:

- What do adult children (and parents) need as children leave home for the first time?

- How will we handle financial issues? Who will pay for board, room, & tuition? When is debt appropriate? What about car, health, life insurance? What financial support, if any, will parents offer? (including travel home for visits, loans, down payments on cars, homes, etc.)

- How about missions? How much should parents be involved in preparation for missions and supporting missionaries financially, socially, spiritually? How do parents and return missionaries interact interdependently?

- How much should parents be involved in getting to know friends and dating life of adult children?

- What is parents’ role in children’s marriage decisions, including choice of spouse, wedding reception, etc.

- How often will we communicate and how often will we visit?

- How often will we hold family reunions? Who will plan? How will married children balance holidays and visits to parents and in-laws?

- How should parents interact with in-laws and grandchildren?

- How should I help if my children are out of work?

- What if adult children want to move back into the house?

- What if my child’s church activity is slipping?

- How do parents encourage self-reliance emotionally, socially, financially, morally, and spiritually?

Empty Nest Parenting, pp. 85-250