What is Bullying?
Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate, hostile, and repeated behavior by one or more people, which is intended to harm others. Bullying takes many forms, and can include many different behaviors, such as:

- Physical violence and attacks, such as hitting and shoving
- Verbal taunts, name-calling, and put-downs
- Threats and intimidation
- Extortion or stealing of money and treasured possessions
- Writing hurtful or threatening e-mails and postings on web sites
- Exclusion from the peer group

Why do Students Bully?
Students bully for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they pick on other students because they need a victim—someone who seems emotionally or physically weaker, or just acts or appears different in some way—to feel more important, popular, or in control. Although some bullies are bigger or stronger than their victims, that’s not always the case.

Sometimes students torment others because that’s the way they’ve been treated. They may think their behavior is normal because they come from families or other settings where everyone regularly gets angry, shouts, or calls names. Some popular TV shows even seem to promote meanness—people are “voted off,” shunned, or ridiculed for their appearance or lack of talent.

Other reasons include: the student has a low self-esteem, the student has a limited repertoire of social skills—not having many alternative behaviors to draw upon in situations that make him or her upset or angry.

What Are the Signs of Bullying?
Although it can be difficult to figure out if bullying is actually happening, there are some warning signs. These include:

- Your child may start acting differently or seeming anxious
- Your child may not be eating
- Your child may not be sleeping well
- Your child may no longer do the things that he or she usually enjoys
- Your child may seem moodier or more easily upset than usual
- Your child may start avoiding certain situations, like taking the bus to school

Let your child know that if he or she is being bullied—or sees it happening to someone else—it’s important to talk to someone about it, whether it’s you, another adult (a teacher, school counselor, or family friend), or a sibling.
Bullying Prevention Tips:

Students:
1. If bullied, tell your parents. Telling is not tattling.
2. Tell a trusted teacher, counselor, principal, or have your parents talk to the school.
3. Do not retaliate or get angry.
4. Respond evenly and firmly or say nothing and walk away.
5. Develop friendships and stick up for each other.
6. Act confident.
7. Take a different route to and from school.
8. Avoid unsupervised areas of school.
9. Do not bring expensive items to school.

Parents:
1. Encourage your child to share programs with you with the assurance that it is not tattling.
2. Praise and encourage your child—a confident child is less likely to be bullied.
3. Help your child develop new friendships—new peers can provide a new chance.
4. Maintain contact with your child’s school. Keep a detailed record of bullying episodes and communications with the school.
5. Encourage your child to participate in sports or physical activity to improve self-esteem.

Schools:
1. Establish a bullying prevention committee.
2. Create a long-term anti-bullying plan and raise school and community awareness and involvement.
3. Use student surveys to determine if there is a bullying problem.
4. Involve parents in planning, discussions, and action plans.
5. Establish classroom rules against bullying.
6. Create positive and negative consequences regarding bullying.
7. Initiate serious talks with bullies and victims of bullying.

How Can a School Community Promote an Anti-Bullying Message?

- **PA announcements** offer an ideal venue for student-generated campaigns that promote a norm for a bully-free school. PA announcements can also encourage and teach students how to report bullying or get appropriate help.

- **School web sites** can offer accurate and appropriate information regarding bullying for students, staff, and parents. They can be used to set forth expectations for how bullying will be addressed at school.

- **School mascots and mottos** can be used to promote messages and expectations for the respect, value, and safety of all students.

- **Student newspapers** can be used to deliver a series of anti-bullying articles that can help educate students and help keep the anti-bullying message alive.
- **Leadership classes** can integrate bullying information to help promote the power of peers to establish an anti-bullying expectation.

- **School letterhead and business cards** can be enhanced to carry a message that promotes respect and belonging for all students.

- **Suggestion boxes** are an anonymous way to report incidents of bullying at school.

- **Adult mentors** can be trained as “safe contacts.” Students can report bullying problems or ask for help and advice for themselves or others from these mentors.

- **Student handbooks, planners, or calendars** can be designed to promote an anti-bullying message and offer tips for asking for help for self or others.

- **Plays and productions** that explore and personalize the issues and consequences of school bullying can be presented.

- **Marques or message boards** can be used to promote anti-bullying messages and a call to action.

**If Your Child Is Being Bullied:**

- Be supportive and get as much information as you can from your child, i.e., what tactics were used and an idea of how often the bullying is occurring.

- Do not tell your child to ignore what is happening to him—this could exacerbate the problem. If your child could ignore the bully, he would have done so already.

- Never ask your child if he did something to deserve the bullying.

- Find out if other children or adults witnessed the bullying.

- Never criticize how your child handles the bullying situation.

- Never encourage your child to retaliate; two wrongs don’t make a right, and if the bullying is happening at school, your child may be suspended or expelled.

- It is imperative that you contact your child’s teacher and principal.

- Do not contact the parents of the bully as this could make matters worse. The principal or school official should contact the bully’s parents.

- Work with the school to find a solution to the bullying problem.

- Once the school has been notified, keep tabs on the situation by having regular conversations with your child to see if the bullying has stopped. If it hasn’t stopped, notify the school again.

- Do all you can to develop your child’s positive attributes. This may help him feel more confident when he is around his peers.
• Teach your child how to stay safe. Show them what to do and where to go when they feel threatened by a bully. Make sure your child knows that they can come to you if they are bullied, and remind them that it is not tattling.

Bullying: Myths and Realities

Mark each statement “true” or “false” based on your own perceptions.

_____ 1. Bullying is a male behavior.

_____ 2. “Once a bully, always a bully.”

_____ 3. Bullies come from families representing all socio-economic levels.

_____ 4. Bullies are usually failing in school.

_____ 5. You can spot bullies because they are agitated and aggressive.

_____ 6. Fighting back against a bully will stop the behavior.

_____ 7. Most bullying happens at school.

_____ 8. Bullies are insecure and have low self-esteem.

_____ 9. Targets of bullies are children with physical differences.

_____ 10. Most bullying involves physical aggression.

_____ 11. Bringing together the parents of the victims and the bully does not help.

_____ 12. Other children should stay removed from the bully/victim conflict or they’ll get bullied as well.

Bonus:

_____ Bullying is a normal fact of growing up, mostly it is just teasing.

Contact Information

Contact your local school counselor for additional information. You may also contact Mrs. Patrice Harris, Intervention Supervisor, at 972-6857 or pharris@bcbe.org.