

Educator Guide: Teaching with the Resilience Animals

Created from: [Five Habits to Help Kids Be Resilient](#), [Greater Good Center](#)

Grade Level: Upper primary

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Objective:

Students will learn and practice five key resilience habits—mindful awareness, shared humanity, self-kindness, kind action, and noticing goodness—using playful animal icons to support emotional regulation and wellbeing.

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Present the concept: "Resilience habits help us cope and bounce back when things get hard."
- Share the "resilience animals" (Spots the Giraffe, Buddy the Dog, Snuggles the Bunny, Doodles the Dolphin, Sunny the Sun) and what habits each represents. You could also use soft toys to represent each.

The **Resilience Habit Animals** help us learn resilience habits.



Figure 1: Resilience Habit Animals in Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Workbook by Jamie Lynn Tatera

The Five Resilience Animals & Habits and Mini Activities (25-30 minutes)

Animal & Habit	Activity Idea & Example
Spots the Giraffe Mindful Awareness i.e. Encourage children to “spot” their thoughts, feelings, and sensations.	Activity: Invite students to pause and notice one thing they can see, hear, or feel. Example Phrase: “I notice the hum of the air conditioner. How about you?”
Buddy the Dog Common Humanity i.e. Remind students that everyone struggles sometimes. Normalise mistakes and challenges by sharing your own experiences.	Activity: In pairs, share a recent frustration. Discuss how everyone faces challenges. Scripted Prompt: “I once struggled too... you’re not alone.”
Snuggles the Bunny Self-Kindness and self-compassion	Activity: Students write a kind note to themselves - “It’s okay to make mistakes.” Reflective Prompt: “If a friend felt this way, what would you say?”
Doodles the Dolphin Kind Actions & Problem Solving	Activity: Create a personal “kind actions list” for when they feel upset (e.g. draw, stretch, breathe). Example: “When upset, I’ll take three deep breaths.”
Sunny the Sun Noticing Goodness	Activity: Ask: “Name one good thing that happened today.” Optionally, write it on a ‘sun beam’ post-it. Tip: Helps counter negative bias.

Reflect & Discuss (10 minutes)

Prompt students with questions:

1. Which animal feels most helpful to you? Why?
2. Can you describe a time when one helped you feel better?
3. How might you use these when things go wrong?

“When I’m stressed, I use Buddy. I remember that I’m not alone and most people go through the same things.”
 —Kamille, age 11

Wrap-Up

1. Revisit the animals and reinforce: “These are tools we can use any time we’re feeling overwhelmed.”
2. Display visual reminders/posters of the four animals and sun and prompt questions during future check-ins.

Why This Works

1. These habits combine mindfulness (Spots), self-compassion (Snuggles), social connection (Buddy), agency (Doodles), and positive attention/ gratitude (Sunny), grounded in research on resilience and wellbeing.
2. Embedding them through play and reflection helps students develop practical tools for emotional wellbeing.

Other Ways to Use in the Classroom

1. **Daily Check-ins:** Begin or end lessons with a quick “animal habit” activity (mindful moment, gratitude share, etc.).
2. **Modelling:** Use the animal language yourself to show students how adults use these habits.
3. **Integrate into Curriculum:** Connect animal habits to stories, health lessons, or social-emotional learning sessions.
4. **Celebrate Progress:** Recognise when students use a habit (“That was Buddy helping you remember we all get nervous sometimes.”).

Reflection Prompts for Teachers

1. Which resilience habit do I naturally model well?
2. Which habit could I strengthen in my own practice?
3. How can I create a classroom culture where all five habits are visible and valued?

References

- [Greater Good article: Five habits to help kids be resilient](#)
- [Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Workbook](#)