

以退為進

yi3 tui4 wei4 jin4

A toddler decided that having to brush his teeth was something that he should wail about. In situations like this, most parents would ask the child to stop crying. But one mom, a Mrs Yiu, did the opposite.

She encouraged the boy to keep crying as “crying it out would make you feel comfortable afterward.” Acting on the advice, the boy continued to cry, but just for a bit longer, and then stopped abruptly.

He was seen, in a video clip that has gone viral, telling his mom calmly afterward that he had “done crying,” that he was “alright” now, and proceeded happily to brush his teeth. This clever mom must know the wisdom of “以退為進” (*yi3 tui4 wei4 jin4*).

“以” (*yi3*) is “to use as,” “退” (*tui4*) “to retreat,” “to move backward,” “為” (*wei4*) “to act as,” “to serve as,” and “進” (*jin4*) “to advance,” “to

Idiom by Lon Yan

move forward.” Literally, “以退為進” (*yi3 tui4 wei4 jin4*) is “to use retreat to advance.”

This idiom means “to retreat in order to advance,” “to make concessions in order to gain advantages.” “以退為進” (*yi3 tui4 wei4 jin4*) may be very effective in getting what you want, as opposed to barging ahead and insisting on your demands.

Negotiation is a good example of “以退為進” (*yi3 tui4 wei4 jin4*). In the process, both sides “退” (*tui4*) make concessions, and both parties end up “進” (*jin4*) reaching an agreement in the end.

Terms containing the character “退” (*tui4*) include:

退休 (*tui4 xiu1*) – to retire

退稅 (*tui4 shui4*) – a tax refund

退出 (*tui4 chu1*) – to withdraw from, to drop out

退步 (*tui4 bu4*) – to do less well than before