

# 人之常情

*ren2 zhi1 chang2 qing2*

Pictures of Sham Shui Po District Council member (深水埗區議會) Leung Yau-fong “sleeping” during council meetings were published in the media. They showed Leung with eyes closed, in different clothing, “proving” that this has happened on more than one occasion.

Leung explained that the meetings are sometimes very lengthy, going on from morning till midnight, discussing different subjects, and they may be very tiring, and it is not like he lies on the floor to sleep.

He countered that he actually has maintained a high attendance rate, and is not like some councillors who arrive late and leave early.

He said: “When I get tired sometimes, I will close my eyes to take a rest.” He described such behavior as “人之常情” (*ren2 zhi1 chang2 qing2*).

“人” (*ren2*) is “a person,” “human being,” “之” (*zhi1*) is “that,” “those,” “常” (*chang2*) means “ordinary,” “common” and “情” (*qing2*) is “sentiment,” “a situation.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

Literally, “人之常情” (*ren2 zhi1 chang2 qing2*) is “human being’s common situation.”

It means “natural and normal,” “a constant occurrence in human relationships,” “feelings common to all ordinary people.” It also means “human nature,” “the way of the world,” and “a matter of common sense among people.”

It is, of course, normal to doze off when one is tired. And when a meeting lasts an entire day, then it is quite normal for those who have to sit through it to get tired.

When you describe behavior as “人之常情” (*ren2 zhi1 chang2 qing2*), it carries the sense that it is understandable, forgivable, even if it is not absolutely proper.

**Terms containing the character “常” (*chang2*) include:**

常識 (*chang2 shi2*) – common sense

經常 (*jing1 chang2*) – regularly, often

常客 (*chang2 ke4*) – a frequent caller

常規 (*chang2 gui1*) – the normal order of things