

自作自受

zi4 zuo4 zi4 shou4

Hong Kong people love to eat hairy crabs, but normal people will show restraint and eat only one or two each meal. Even those who are crazy about this crustacean (甲殼類的) delicacy will not eat more than five in one go. Eating 36 is, well, just crazy.

But that is exactly what a Hong Kong man said he did. He even posted a picture on Facebook, displaying neat rows of the shells of crabs he had just consumed. Needless to say, he became sick afterward, complaining of feeling cold and dizzy. One can only say he “自作自受” (zi4 zuo4 zi4 shou4)?

“自” (zi4) is “self,” “作” (zuo4) means “to make,” “to do,” “to act,” “自” (zi4), again, is “self” and “受” (shou4) is “to receive,” “to accept,” “to bear,” “to endure.” Literally, “自作自受” (zi4 zuo4 zi4 shou4) is “self do self receive.” It means “to suffer the consequences of one’s own actions.”

Idiom by Lon Yan

It has the same meaning of the English expression “As one makes one’s bed so one must lie in it.”

The idiom may be applied to a range of situations. A terrorist who blows himself up while making a bomb is “自作自受” (zi4 zuo4 zi4 shou4), so is a child who ignores the advice of their parents, goes out without warm clothing in winter, and catches a cold.

When someone is already suffering from the consequences of his or her own mistake and you say “自作自受 (zi4 zuo4 zi4 shou4)!” it is like saying “You deserved it!” That, of course, is a rather mean thing to do.

Terms containing the character “自” (zi4) include:

自己 (zi4 ji3) – oneself

自然 (zi4 ran2) – nature, naturally

自動 (zi4 dong4) – automatic

自由 (zi4 you2) – freedom