

# 飲鴆止渴

yin3 zhen4 zhi3 ke3

A mother in the United States posted pictures of her three-year-old daughter standing on the toilet seat online. It was “cute,” so she thought at first, but then it dawned on her that her little one was actually reenacting what she learned in school – what to do in a lockdown.

This made the mother immensely sad, as well as the people who saw her posting, many of whom expressed outrage that a child should need to be taught how to dodge a gun-waving attacker.

Mass shootings of innocent people often happen in the US. The situation is scarily pathetic. But how can it be otherwise when lax gun laws have made it “easier to get a gun than a puppy” there?

One argument for citizens to own guns is the right to self-protection, but clearly to do so is just “飲鴆止渴” (yin3 zhen4 zhi3 ke3). “飲” (yin3) is “to drink,” “鴆” (zhen4) “a legendary bird with poison feathers,” “止” (zhi3) “to stop” and “渴”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

(ke3) “thirst.” Literally, “飲鴆止渴” (yin3 zhen4 zhi3 ke3) is “drink poison bird to stop thirst.”

What is being consumed is poison made by soaking the bird’s feathers in water, not the bird itself. The idiom means “to drink poison to quench thirst,” figuratively “to seek temporary relief regardless of deadly consequences.”

The “鴆” (zhen4) here is letting everyone own a gun, and the only right it protects, apparently, is the right to shoot and be shot. Civilians owning guns only result in kids shooting kids, kids shooting parents, students shooting students and road rage drivers shooting other drivers.

**Terms containing the character “渴” (ke3) include:**

口渴 (kou3 ke3) – thirsty

解渴 (jie3 ke3) – to quench one’s thirst

渴望 (ke3 wang4) – to yearn for

渴求 (ke3 qiu2) – be eager for