

Idiom by Lon Yan

親力親為

qin1 li4 qin1 wei4

A defiant defendant kept refusing to obey Jackson County Circuit Court Judge John McBain's order for him to stop harassing a woman.

The defendant kept talking back, and every time he did so, the Michigan judge increased his jail time for contempt – from 93 days to 365 days.

And when the bailiff tried to handcuff the defendant to take him to country jail, he resisted. Seeing that, the judge took off his robe, came down from the bench, and personally subdued the unruly man.

The incident happened in December and the video of the unusual scene was made public by a newspaper recently.

Judges usually rely on security officers to maintain order. But this judge apparently preferred the hands-on approach. We call this “親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*).

“親” (*qin1*) means “in person,” “力” (*li4*) “force,” “power,” “strength,” “ability,” “親” (*qin1*) “為” (*wei4*) “to do.” Literally, “親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*) is “make an effort and do things personally,” “to do something oneself,” which is what the idiom means.

“親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*) is a good work ethic. It means giving personal attention to a job. “親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*) helps to ensure that everything is done right.

Leading by sitting behind a desk is not “親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*). Leading from the front is.

But good leaders must trust their staff and properly delegate. Overly “親力親為” (*qin1 li4 qin1 wei4*) can be a problem, as it could lead to micromanaging, which is not good leadership.

Terms containing the character “親” (*qin1*) include:

親身 (*qin1 shen1*) – personally; in person

親戚 (*qin1 qi1*) – a relative

親切 (*qin1 qie4*) – cordial; friendly

親密 (*qin1 mi4*) – close; intimate