

Idiom by Lon Yan

不打自招

bu4 da3 zi4 zhao1

What do you call stitching up a wound on a cat without anesthetics? Cruelty to animals.

That was what a construction worker was charged with when he used a fish line to sew up a wound on his cat when the original stitches broke open, apparently deciding that neither anesthetics or vet training is necessary.

The DIY procedure was done behind closed doors, and no one would have found out had the self-proclaimed animal surgeon not posted his handy work on facebook. The way the offence came to light is what we call “不打自招” (*bu4 da3 zi4 zhao1*).

“不” (*bu4*) is “no,” “not,” “打” (*da3*) “to hit,” “to beat,” “自” (*zi4*) “self,” “naturally” and “招” (*zhao1*) “to confess,” “to recruit,” “to enlist.” The term “招供” (*zhao1 gong4*) means to make a confession of one’s crime. Literally, “不打自招” (*bu4 da3 zi4 zhao1*) is “no beating self

confess”. The idiom means “to confess without being tortured,” “to make a confession without duress.”

The judge believed that the man did not mean to torture the cat, and that he’s a cat-loving person. So the feline was returned to his care, with a warning not to attempt another DIY surgery, and 100 hours of community work as penalty.

People don’t usually confess to a crime or wrongdoing without prompting. In fact, some believe the best way to get a confession from hardened criminals is doing it like Jack Bauer, the fictional federal agent in TV series 24 who routinely tortures terrorists.

“不打自招” (*bu4 da3 zi4 zhao1*) is usually the result of a slip of tongue, boasting, or plain stupidity.

Terms containing the character “招” (*zhao1*) include:

招認 (*zhao1 ren4*) – to confess; to admit

招待 (*zhao1 dai4*) – to receive; to entertain

招牌 (*zhao1 pai2*) – a shop sign; a signboard

招聘 (*zhao1 pin4*) – recruitment