

Idiom by Lon Yan

苦中作樂

ku3 zhong1 zuo4 le4

Finding your living room in two feet of water is very distressing. But a man managed to find joy in such a sorry situation.

Saul Saldana hasn't lost his mind. He'd just discovered that he could do fishing, apparently his favorite pastime, without having even to leave home. When he opened his front door, flood water gushed in and washed a foot-long fish into his house in Houston, US.

His family took video as he dived a few times into the water and successfully wrangled the fish. His daughter was heard laughing in the background. What the man and his family displayed was the spirit of “苦中作樂” (*ku3 zhong1 zuo4 le4*).

“苦” (*ku3*) is “bitter,” “painful,” “pains,” “sufferings,” “hardship,” “中” (*zhong1*) “center,”

“middle,” “in the middle of,” “in the course of,” “作” (*zuo4*) “to make,” “to do,” “樂” (*le4*) “joyous,” “happy,” joy,” “happiness.” “作樂” (*zuo4 le4*) is “to make merry,” “to enjoy oneself,” to have a good time,” “to have fun.”

Literally, “苦中作樂” (*ku3 zhong1 zuo4 le4*) is “to find joy in sorrows,” “to have fun in the middle of pain.” The idiom means “to enjoy oneself in something spite of one’s suffering,” “to have fun despite sufferings.”

Being able to “苦中作樂” (*ku3 zhong1 zuo4 le4*) is a very useful skill that can help you get through rough patches in life.

The opposite attitude is “無病呻吟” (*wu2 bing4 shen1 yin2*), which means “to moan and groan without being ill,” “to complain without a cause,” “to make a fuss about nothing (or trifles).”

Terms containing the character “樂” (*le4*) include:

樂觀 (*le4 guan1*) – optimistic; hopeful

樂意 (*le4 yi4*) – to be willing to; pleased; with pleasure

樂趣 (*le4 qu4*) – fun; delight; pleasure; enjoyment

樂事 (*le4 shi4*) – a pleasure; a joy