

Idiom by Lon Yan

咎由自取

jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3

Welsh international rugby player Scott Baldwin stuck his hand through the fence into a lion's den as he was on an outing with his team at a wildlife park in South Africa, and needed eight stitches to fix the wound.

Coach Steve Tandy was clearly not impressed with Baldwin's antic. Explaining the player's absence from a game, Tandy called the act "pretty stupid," and went on to absolve all parties of blame, including the big cat, saying "in fairness it was nothing to do with the lion."

What he meant was Baldwin was "咎由自取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*) for his predicament.

"咎" (*jiu4*) is "fault," "blame," "由" (*you2*) "because," "by," "through," "from," "自" (*zi4*) "self," and "取" (*qu3*) "to get," "to take." "咎由自

取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*), literally, is "getting the blame through oneself." The idiom means "a trouble of one's own making."

"咎由自取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*) can be applied in many situations. If you didn't study for an exam and failed it, it is "咎由自取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*), so is getting a bad hangover after excessive drinking the previous evening.

Someone slips and falls, and you laugh at him and say "咎由自取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*). If he starts to hit you, you are also "咎由自取" (*jiu4 you2 zi4 qu3*)!

There is a slightly different version of the idiom: "自取其咎" (*zi4 qu3 qi2 jiu4*), meaning "to bring blame on oneself," "to have only oneself to blame."

Terms containing the character "自" (*zi4*) include:

自己 (*zi4 ji3*) – self; oneself

自由 (*zi4 you2*) – freedom

自動 (*zi4 dong4*) – automatic

自信 (*zi4 xin4*) – self-confident