

Idiom by Lon Yan

感恩圖報

gan3 en1 tu2 bao4

A fresh graduate of the University of Hong Kong found out that his cousin has, over the last few years, been using her scholarship money to put him through university.

The cousin, her family and his parents didn't tell him about the arrangement so he wouldn't have to worry and could concentrate on his studies.

The student said on a social media posting that he just couldn't stop crying when he found out, and asked for suggestions as to how best to repay such kindness. One netizen said he should spread the kindness by helping other people when he is financially capable.

The sentiment expressed by the student is described by the idiom “感恩圖報” (gan3 en1 tu2 bao4).

“感” (gan3) is “to feel,” “to realize,” “to sense,” “to feel appreciation for;” “恩” (en1) “favor;” “grace;” “a significant favor or kindness that morally entails a debt of gratitude.” “感恩” (gan3 en1) means “to have gratitude for,” “thanksgiving.”

“圖” (tu2) “to plan,” “to plot for,” and “報” (bao4) “to reciprocate (回報),” “to recompense (補償),” “to requite (報答; 回報; 報復).” “感恩圖報” (gan3 en1 tu2 bao4) means “grateful and seeking to repay the kindness.”

A related idiom is “沒齒難忘” (mei2 chi3 nan2 wang4), literally, “hard to forget even after one's teeth fall out.” It means “to remember a benefactor as long as one lives.” It is used to express one's “undying gratitude” to another.

Terms containing the character “恩” (en1) include:

恩怨 (en1 yuan4) – feeling of gratitude and resentment; long-standing grudge

恩人 (en1 ren2) – a benefactor

恩典 (en1 dian3) – a favor; an act of grace

恩情 (en1 qing2) – kindness; affection; a debt of gratitude