

# 不可救藥

*bu4 ke3 jiu4 yao4*

A man was sent to jail for two years for stealing from young schoolgirls.

At a glance, the sentence (判決) seemed rather harsh as the cases mostly involved losses of **only** about HK\$100. But it was related to 28 theft charges and police believed there were more than 50 victims.

In one case, the 37-year-old defendant managed to hoodwink (欺詐) a 15-year-old student out of HK\$3,500. Also, he had 94 previous convictions (定罪)!

To a criminal with such a long rap sheet (案底), the **only** thing that can be said about him is “不可救藥” (*bu4 ke3 jiu4 yao4*). (Rap sheet is an informal way of describing a criminal record.)

“不” (*bu4*) is “no,” “可” (*ke3*) is “can,” “救” (*jiu4*) means “save” or “rescue” and “藥” (*yao4*) means “medicine.” Literally, “不可救藥” is “no

## Idiom by Lon Yan

can save medicine” or “no medicine can save.”

In fact, in this idiom, the characters “救藥” (*jiu4 yao4*) are used together as a term. It means “a remedy” (補救辦法), or to remedy a situation.

“不可救藥” means incurable (無法治愈的), beyond remedying, irreversible (不能逆轉的) or incorrigible (屢教不改的). This idiom also connotes “hopelessness.”

When a company is so deep in debt that it is doomed to fail, you can say it is 不可救藥.

If someone keeps making the same mistake despite repeated warnings and advice, you can say, “You are 不可救藥!” (You are hopeless!)

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**Terms containing the character “救” (*jiu4*) include:**

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求救 (*qiu2 jiu4*) - to cry or to ask for help

拯救 (*zheng3 jiu4*) - to rescue, aid or relieve

急救 (*ji2 jiu4*) - to give first aid

救火車 (*jiu4 huo3 che1*) - a fire engine