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Humans may think prey animals like zebras face a lot of long-term stress from the constant threat of predation, but research shows it's generally the short-term stress when a predator attacks that affects them most visibly. Starlings, too, seem to manage stress somewhat unexpectedly. When subjected to chronic stress from predator calls and decoys in the lab, their stress hormone levels actually decreased. For us as humans, simply watching their graceful murmurations may help decrease any stress hormones we're producing right now. The simple act of looking at natural-world scenery can relax and restore our concentration as mentioned in the oft-cited literature surrounding Attention Restoration Theory (ART) published by Kaplan and Kaplan in 1989. In light of the dearth of outdoor time, countries like Japan, Korea, and increasingly the U.S., have been cultivating the practice of forest-bathing (shinrin yoku) as a form of chronic stress relief. Shinrin yoku involves mindfully walking through forests and green spaces and letting your mind wander, zone out, relax, and appreciate the larger natural world around you. Since 2004, Japan has also invested millions of dollars in forest therapy research and other countries are following suit there as well. It inspired me because I'm struggling with stress and after reading this, I went to the forest, and it really made me calm and relax.

- Which aspects of the strategy or system are most compelling?

A few years ago, a large and presumably stressed-out audience of readers sent Robert Sapolsky's book *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* to the best-seller list. In it, the Stanford neurology professor highlighted how, unlike humans, most wild animals don't seem to suffer from chronic stress. Such a harmful maladaptive physiological response would simply not be selected for throughout evolution. Acute episodic stress is another story. It's actually beneficial. It sparks up the sympathetic nervous system, triggers the fight or flight response, and readies the body for action by increasing blood pressure and heart and respiration rates. It's a complex process that stimulates our adrenal glands to secrete stress hormones like cortisol directly into our bloodstream.

- How has your perspective of nature changed?

Now I see the natural world as a thing that makes me calm down.

- How can these systems of biomimicry be applied to your own life, campus or community?

We can plant more trees and use green walls to bring that sense of forest into our home.

My IG post and caption:

Biomimicry (literally: imitation of the living) aims to take inspiration from natural selection solutions adopted by nature and translate the principles to human engineering. The biomimicry approach aims to favor "choices" tested by nature which took millions of years to understand what works best and what doesn't. The application of biomimicry can benefit the built environment through site design, construction, and operations, as well as reduce the negative impact on the natural environment of numerous techniques for reducing carbon emissions, waste, and others.



