During a routine appointment, the physician noticed that their patient had gone to just one visit to a mental health specialist they had agreed he should see. The doctor asked “What happened? I notice you only went to see Dr.\_\_\_ once?” The patient replied that he felt “put off” during that visit, and that he felt “rushed” and “ignored.” He had decided it wasn’t worth returning. After further discussion they both agreed the patient was still not doing well, psychologically, and needed further care. The PCP recommended a different specialist who he thought would be a better fit and the patient agreed to give that one a try.

This case shows a PCP astutely spotting that their patient wasn’t following up for a clinically significant mental health need (a contextual red flag), asked about it (probed), elicited the contextual factor, and came up with a contextualized care plan (worked with patient to identify another provider).