



LET'S MOVE FROM

# RDH TO OMT

FOR DENTAL HYGIENISTS

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BY KARESE LAGUERRE

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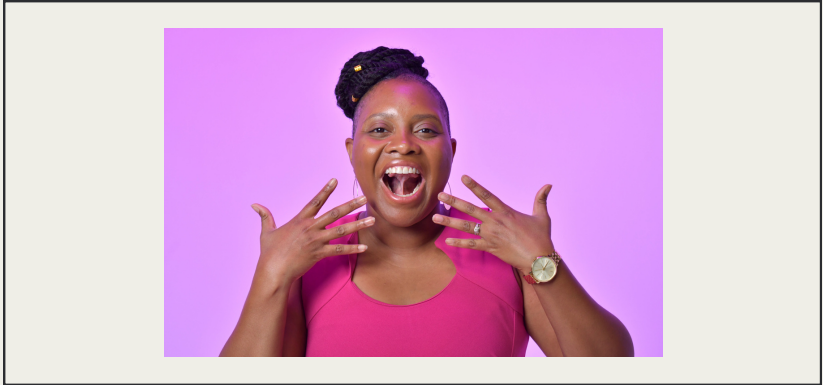
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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



## **Karese Laguerre**

Meet Karese Laguerre, a trailblazer in the world of dental health and myofunctional therapy. With a relentless passion for holistic well-being, Karese has dedicated her career to unlocking the potential of every smile.

As a seasoned dental hygienist and a driving force behind The Intentional Hygienist community, Karese has redefined the role of oral health professionals. Her journey is a testament to the power of continuous learning and collaboration. Karese believes that each smile tells a story, and she's committed to helping individuals craft narratives of confidence and vitality.

Beyond the clinical setting, Karese is an educator, speaker, and advocate for change. She envisions a world where oral health isn't just a routine, but a gateway to a fulfilling life. With a knack for fostering connections and inspiring growth, Karese invites you to join her on a transformative journey towards better smiles and better lives.

Get ready to be captivated by Karese Laguerre's vision, expertise, and unwavering dedication. Together, let's rewrite the narrative of oral health and embark on a path of empowerment.

# INTRODUCTION

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## WELCOME TO THE MYOPATHWAY: YOUR 5-DAY JOURNEY FROM RDH TO OMT SUCCESS!

You're standing at the threshold of an exciting lateral career option that you may be surprised to know you're already well-equipped for. Over a century ago, a pioneering dentist named Dr. Alfred Rogers, mentored by the esteemed Dr. Edward Angle, embarked on a journey to unravel the mysteries of malocclusion. Little did he know, he was laying the foundation for the field of myofunctional therapy.

Today, dental hygienists like you stand at the forefront of this evolutionary field. With your in-depth understanding of oral function and form, you hold the key to transforming the lives of countless patients. As the world of healthcare shifts towards a more comprehensive wellness model, myofunctional therapy and airway-centered dentistry are at the forefront of this transformation. Now, more than ever, is the prime time to embark on your journey into the field.

This guide is your roadmap to seamlessly integrate myofunctional therapy into your career. Whether you're eager to recognize clinical signs of orofacial myofunctional disorders, forge connections with like-minded professionals, enhance your patient communication, explore various career options, or deepen your knowledge through education, you'll find the guidance you need right here. Your journey to becoming a successful Oral Myofunctional Therapist starts now. Let's embark on this incredible voyage together.

# DAY 1

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## CLINICAL SIGNS ARE CRUCIAL IN UNDERSTANDING YOUR PATIENTS' NEEDS.

### Overview

Day 1 is setting the foundation for what will eventually define your initial assessment and screenings within your current clinical dental setting. Many of the signs have been in front of you and some may be new. Take time during day 1 to subtly observe during your intraoral and extraoral evaluations to notate some of the signs of orofacial myofunctional disorders.

### Intraoral Signs

In the clinical dental setting, it's essential for dental hygienists to recognize intraoral signs of oral dysfunction. These signs often include issues such as tongue ties, high palates, open bites, and tongue thrust. Tongue ties, or ankyloglossia, can limit tongue mobility, affecting speech and proper swallowing patterns. High palates may contribute to airway constriction and speech issues.

Open bites may lead to problems with speech articulation and mastication. Tongue thrust, or reverse swallowing, can disrupt normal tongue posture, potentially affecting oral development and function. By identifying these intraoral signs during routine dental examinations, hygienists can play a crucial role in early detection and intervention, guiding patients toward a healthier, functional orofacial profile. To further enhance your knowledge in this area, refer to resources such as the article "[Broom's Systematic Screening for Oral Myofunctional Disorders](#)" for more in-depth insights.

### Extraoral Signs

Dental hygienists can also play a pivotal role in recognizing extraoral signs of oral dysfunction during clinical examinations. These external indicators include mouth breathing, facial muscle tension, and poor lip seal.

DAY 1

Mouth breathing, often accompanied by dry oral tissues, can signify airway problems and may lead to oral health issues like dental caries. Facial muscle tension can manifest as discomfort, headaches, or even jaw pain. Poor lip seal can affect speech articulation and promote mouth breathing. Identifying these extraoral signs is essential for understanding the comprehensive needs of your patients. As a dental hygienist, being vigilant about these indicators allows you to raise awareness and recommend appropriate interventions for patients' well-being, ultimately contributing to their overall oral health and quality of life. For a systematic screening approach, consider referencing the article "[Broom's Systematic Screening for Oral Myofunctional Disorders](#)" to further sharpen your ability to detect these extraoral signs.

**BROOMS Screener**

Access a printable version of the screener and note template for accurate documentation [HERE](#)

**Quick List**

**Intraoral Signs**

- Narrow arches
- Vaulted Palate
- Scalloped Tongue
- Malocclusion
- Tongue Thrust
- Restrictive Oral Frenums
- Crowded Teeth
- Enlarged Tonsils

**Extraoral Signs**

- Allergic Shiners
- Narrow Nostrils
- Open Mouth Posture
- Gummy Smile (Vertical Maxillary Excess)
- Long Facial Growth
- Facial Asymmetry
- Bunched Mentalis

**BROOMS**  
Myofunctional Airway Screener

<b>B</b>	Bruxism/ Occlusal Wear	■ Yes	■ No
<b>R</b>	espiration	■ Audible	■ WNL
<b>O</b>	rally defensive	■ Yes	■ No
<b>O</b>	pen mouth posture	■ Yes	■ No
<b>M</b>	axillary transverse width	■ Narrow	■ WNL
<b>S</b>	trained mentalis	■ Yes	■ No

A sweeping generalization of patients that is not definitive, but easy to incorporate in a clinical hygiene appointment, to identify patients who need myofunctional referral. Two or more marked in the first column requires referral for orofacial myofunctional assessment and evaluation.

## DAY 2

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# BUILD ESSENTIAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE AIRWAY-FOCUSED HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY.

Myofunctional therapy is an incredible field, often described as amazing, wonderful, and even, in some cases, magical. However, it's important to understand that it's rarely a solitary solution. To help your patients achieve their goals, you'll need a network of professionals who share your passion and vision. Building this network can be both exciting and challenging, but it's always essential.

### Networking

Take a moment to consider how "airway friendly" your area is. Start looking for medical and dental professionals who are like-minded in their approach to holistic oral health. Connecting with these professionals not only expands your knowledge but also opens doors for referrals. It's an important step in your journey, and you can even begin this process before taking any myofunctional therapy courses. Building a network of providers takes time,

so while you're in the learning phase, you're simultaneously expediting your success by laying a strong foundation of trusted professionals who will be sending clients your way.

### Use directories

To get started, explore the directories of the following organizations to find dentists and doctors in your area who are airway friendly and share your commitment to comprehensive oral health:

- [Foundation for Airway Health](#)
- [American Academy of Physiological Medicine and Dentistry \(AAPMD\)](#)
- [International Association of Tongue Tie Professionals \(IATP\)](#)
- [LightScalpel](#)
- [Airway Dentist Locator by AHS](#)

By reaching out and connecting with professionals from these organizations, you're not only creating a network but also opening doors to new opportunities in the field of myofunctional therapy. Building these partnerships is a pivotal step towards success in your exciting journey ahead.

## DAY 3

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# CRAFT MEANINGFUL PATIENT CONVERSATIONS THAT CONVEY THE NECESSITY OF MYO.

You know that moment when the doctor leaves the operatory after the examination, and the patient looks at you, searching for reassurance on the recommended treatment? Well, that's a scenario you'll still encounter in the world of myofunctional therapy. Your patients will be navigating new and potentially unfamiliar territory, and they'll need your guidance and reassurance throughout their journey.

### **Tapping Into Your Depth**

To become an effective communicator, you must tap into what originally piqued your interest in myofunctional therapy. Recall the driving force behind your journey. For many, it starts with a personal connection, perhaps discovering their own or a family member's dysfunction. Remember that initial feeling – the concern, the urge to seek treatment or the desire to delve deeper into research. Understanding what genuinely motivated you to seek more information or help is the key to connecting with your patients.





I'll give you an example from my own journey. In 2014 I was introduced to airway and myo. Despite working in an airway practice, it wasn't until almost 3 years later when a myofunctional therapist informed me that my 7-year-old daughter was struggling to breathe that I gained my deep motivation and overcame my personal barriers. Despite limited time and financial resources, I found a way to invest in her well-being because I felt like I failed as a mother. Your shift into myofunctional therapy was prompted by a specific catalyst, a turning point. How can you translate that discomfort, concern, or desire for change into a short conversation with your patients?



In my story I wasn't convinced by the education, nor sold on the "solution." Consider the analogy of addressing a dental filling rather than waiting for the pain and financial burden of a root canal. The conversation has to center around their deeper problems they want to resolve. Your story and motivation hold the power to connect with your patients and convey the importance of intervention in oral myofunctional disorders, making it more than just a recommendation but a path to their well-being.

Connecting through your personal journey and experiences makes you not just an oral health professional but a trusted guide who understands the transformative impact of myofunctional therapy on their lives. It's the bridge that helps your patients embrace this remarkable journey with confidence and conviction.

## DAY 4

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# EXPLORE THE DIVERSE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE BEYOND BECOMING A MYOFUNCTIONAL THERAPIST.

The world of sleep dentistry is booming, estimated at a staggering \$380 million industry, and it has experienced rapid growth, particularly since the onset of COVID-19. While airway health encompasses much more than just sleep, this surge in interest and awareness is fantastic news for the field as a whole. With heightened awareness come new opportunities.

If you're drawn to myofunctional therapy, airway health, or sleep but have no desire to work directly with patients in therapy programs, know that there are numerous alternative career paths that await you. Dental offices, in particular, are seeking professionals who can bridge the gap between patients and treatment, serving as knowledgeable treatment coordinators. These roles are vital for practices that specialize in airway, appliances, myofunctional therapy, and sleep.

You play a pivotal role in facilitating communication and understanding between patients and dental teams. Your expertise can be the selling point for treatment, ensuring patients receive the care they need. Making it easy for offices to fill their schedules with patients who can benefit from these services is a skill in high demand.

Interestingly, these positions often don't appear in typical job listings. Dental practices may not directly advertise for sleep coordinators, myofunctional therapy consultants, or integrative coaches. However, you can stack your resume with valuable skills and experiences that are transferable to these roles.

## Alternative Career Options



### Sleep Consultant

Consider a role as a sleep coordinator, helping patients understand the connection between sleep apnea and oral health. In dental sleep medicine offices this position helps to guide patient through their oral appliance treatment and provides sleep hygiene.



### Consultant

Become a consultant in the field, offering your expertise to dental practices or healthcare facilities. Many practices struggle with integrating myofunctional therapy in their office and this role is growing in demand.



### Sales Representative

Explore the option of becoming a sales representative for an airway appliance company, laser company, or associated nasal or sleep hygiene company, to promote products that enhance patients' lives.



### Treatment Coordinator

Work as a treatment coordinator, guiding patients through their myofunctional therapy journey. This is an in demand role for many airway focused or dental sleep practices. Consider this role if you prefer having the deep conversations from Day 3 to motivate and inspire patients to case acceptance.



### Office Manager

Consider taking the next step in leadership in your practice. With myofunctional airway education you may learn more about practice management, insurance billing, and patient management. These skills will enable you to lead a practice, especially a sleep or airway one.



### Mentor

Consider using your knowledge to enhance the field by educating and nurturing other dental hygienists who aspire to become myofunctional therapists. Without having practices, you may not be able to mentor on patient treatment, but you are qualified to discuss education and various career options.

# DAY 5

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## FOCUS ON ENHANCING YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A COURSE TAILORED TO YOUR CAREER GOALS.

### Introductory Course

Obviously it is essential to take an introductory myofunctional therapy course. But how does one know what course is right for them? I have a helpful [YouTube video](#) that details this, but let's dive into some other tips here.

Understand where you want your myofunctional education to take you. Review the career options in Day 4 and clearly define key takeaways you want from an introductory course. Then take that list and “shop” the various educators. Ideally, those educators should be able to respond to your inquiry with answers about how their course will or will not meet your goals.

The industry has shifted in the last 10 years and moved from 1-2 teaching organizations to 6+. Each one having a specific or unique value proposition. Navigate and choose wisely.

### Foundational Education

Should you determine you are not ready for, or do not require a comprehensive myofunctional therapy course and would like to invest in knowing just enough to make an educated referral, there are options for that as well.

Join the [Intentional Hygienists Facebook group](#) for introductory education or OMT for the RDH to network and interact with peers who are at various stages of the journey in myofunctional therapy.

Join a [professional association or organization](#) to access lectures affordably and gain knowledge you need to have educated conversations with your professional colleagues and patients. Alternatively join an education community like [Myo Mentality](#) to gain advanced education.

# CONCLUSION

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## THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING GOOD.

Congratulations on completing this 5-day guide!

By recognizing signs, connecting with like-minded professionals, honing your patient communication skills, exploring career options, and continuing your education, you're well on your way to becoming a successful OMT. Remember that each day's progress builds upon the last, and your dedication will transform your career in dental hygiene into a fulfilling journey in myofunctional therapy.

For additional resources join our community on Facebook: [The Intentional Hygienist](#)

