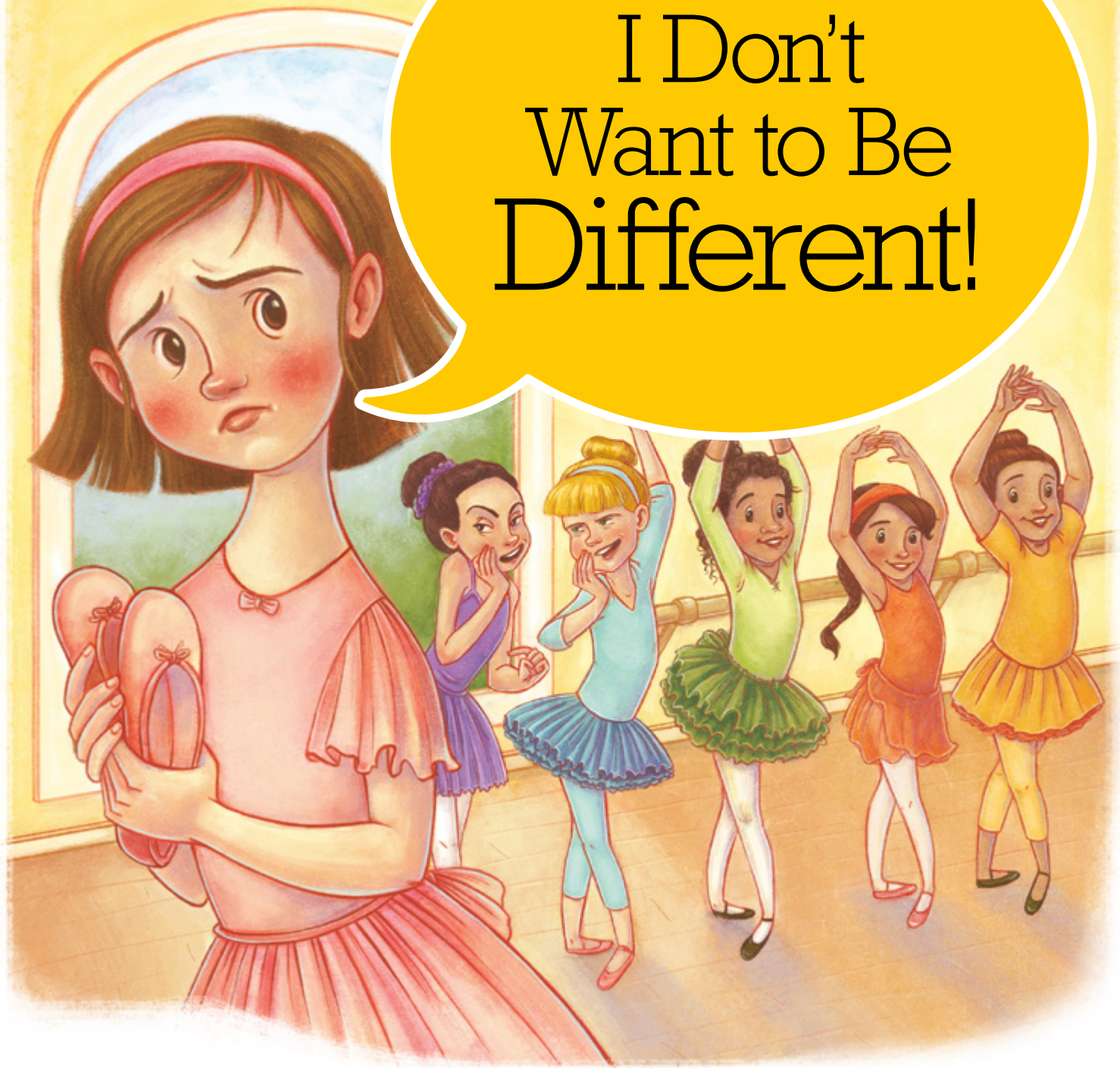


# I Don't Want to Be Different!



**By Eliza Broadbent**

(Based on a true story)

*“The worth of souls is great in the sight of God”  
(Doctrine and Covenants 18:10).*

**M**ika always looked forward to dance class. She loved listening to the music. She loved practicing her butterfly skip and getting it just right. And she especially loved it when the whole class moved together. When they did that, it was like the dancers were all the same. It felt like she wasn't the only one with Down syndrome.

Today they were learning a new dance step. Mika watched her teacher leap into the air. She watched the other girls try. Some figured it out right away. Some took a few tries. Mika tried over and over, but she just couldn't get it right yet.

“Will you help me, teacher?” Mika asked.

The girl next to her looked at Mika. Then she leaned over to her friend. “Why does she talk like that?” she whispered. Both girls turned and looked at Mika.



On the way home from class, Mika was quiet the whole way.

When they got home, Mom was kneading dough in the kitchen. She had flour on her cheek. Sometimes that made Mika laugh. But today she just dropped her bag to the floor and sank into a chair at the table.

“How was dance?” Mom asked.

“Terrible,” Mika said. “I asked for help, and a girl said I talk funny. Then she stared at me.” Mika looked down. “I don’t want to go to dance anymore.”

“Oh, Mika!” Mom said. “I’m so sorry. Dad and I love watching you dance. We’re so proud of how hard you work!”

Mika felt tears starting to come. “I don’t like the Down syndrome in me. I don’t like that my face is different. I wish it wasn’t so hard for me to learn new things. I even have to practice talking!”

Dad sat down by Mika and put his arm around her. “Mika, we love you *so much*. We wouldn’t change one thing about you.”

But Mika just shook her head and buried her face in her arms. “I don’t want to be different. I want my Down syndrome to be taken out of me!”

Mom and Dad were quiet for a few moments.

“I have an idea,” Mom said. Mika peeked out over her arms. “Why don’t you pray and ask Heavenly Father how *He* feels about you?”

Mika thought about that. She liked saying prayers. Slowly, she nodded. “Can you write down the question so I’ll remember what to ask?”

Mom wrote the question down. Then Mika took the paper and went to her room to pray.

When she came into the kitchen a few minutes later, Mika’s face was lit up like a light bulb. “Heavenly Father answered!” she said.

“What did He say?” Mom asked.

“He said, ‘Mika, I love you just the way you are,’” she said. “And He said it with a LOUD voice!”

The next week at dance, Mika didn’t worry about what the other girls thought about her Down syndrome. Instead, she noticed another girl, Sara, who looked sad. Sara was having a hard time learning some of the new moves too.

When Mika got home, she decided to write a note to Sara. She drew lots of hearts. Mom helped her with the spelling.

“Dear Sara,” Mika wrote. “You’re a great dancer. I want to be your friend. I am happy you are in my dance class.”

Mika couldn’t wait to give Sara the note. She wanted Sara to feel happy and loved at dance too. ●

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

