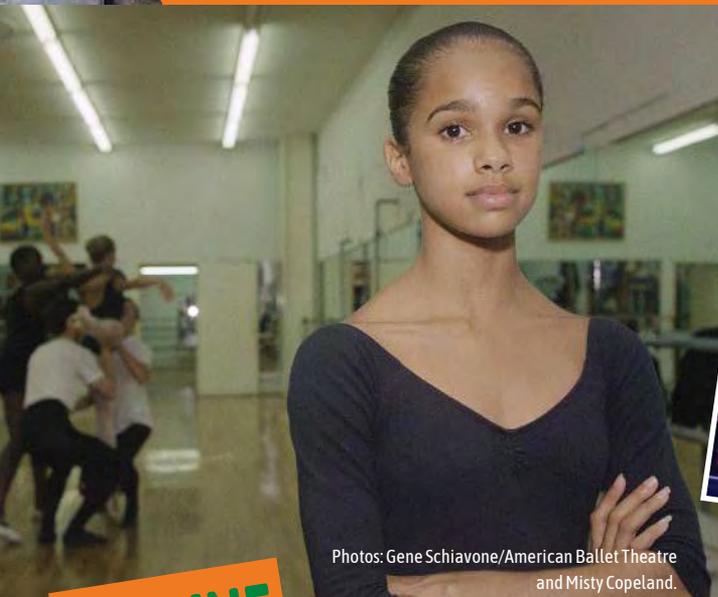




COURAGE

...overcomes fear.™



Photos: Gene Schiavone/American Ballet Theatre and Misty Copeland.



THE COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT

IMAGINE

... what it would feel like to discover a new talent you have and to work really hard to be great at it. You make a lot of progress and even hope to become a professional, but then you are told that you don't have what it takes. This is what happened to Misty.

Misty Copeland was one of six kids with a single mother. She and her family moved often and even had to live in a single motel room for extended periods of time. "I was a quiet kid and the stress of moving and changing schools gave me terrible headaches," Misty says as she recalls her childhood.

Then when she was thirteen, Misty tried ballet for the first time and loved it. It was the first thing that ever made her feel strong and confident. Her coach, Cindy, believed in her and offered Misty so much care and encouragement. Misty worked hard and believed she had what it took to be a professional, so she applied for a position with the top ballet companies.

But she was confused and disappointed as she read her rejection letter: "Unfortunately, you have not been accepted. You lack the right feet, turnout, and torso length. You have the wrong body for ballet."

Despite this rejection, Misty chose not to give up and had the courage to continue believing in herself even though she was told that there was so much wrong with her.

So after high school, Misty moved to New York City to pursue her dream of dancing at the American Ballet Theatre (ABT), but things weren't easy. She was the only black student, which made her feel isolated. "I was looking for people to connect with...and I just felt really alone." She also had a different body shape than the other women, which made her feel insecure. "When you don't see people around you that look like you, that's hard [mentally] and emotionally."

So Misty finally started to give up as she experienced self-doubt and started believing that she really didn't have what

it took to be a ballerina. But she received encouragement and wisdom from her boyfriend and mentor. They helped her get back up and regain focus so she could start to see the bigger picture. If she had the courage and grit to stick with it, she could be an inspiration to others. Then Misty had a realization: "My skin color and body type aren't going to change. I just have to love myself and be the best dancer I can be."

It took so much courage for Misty to persevere through rejection, racial discrimination, injury and struggles with body image. But at age 32, Misty made history by becoming the first black female to have a principal dancer role at ABT. She had to maintain her courage to get up after being knocked down many times, but pushed through and achieved her dreams. "My hope is to inspire many to dare to dream bigger than they can imagine."

Just like Misty, you can have courage to dream big and overcome your struggles to become a hero in your lifestory.

Visit Mind-Cue.com for free resources and enjoy more inspiring lifestories, videos and more to become a hero in your lifestory.

QUESTIONS LEAD TO UNDERSTANDING

1. What evidence is there that Misty exhibited courage? What challenged her courage?
2. What challenges did Misty face that helped her develop courage? How did those challenges help her develop courage?
3. How can you learn from Misty's lifestory of rejection and courage? What actions of courage will you take to help you live your own best lifestory?