

Women Learn to Reach for Success

By GEORGIA DULLEA

Barbara Preminger, an actress who may currently be seen soaking her hands in Palmolive Dishwashing Liquid on the Madge the Manicurist television commercials, longs to get her feet wet on a Broadway stage.

"My goal," she told a dozen fellow participants in a Women's Success Teams seminar the other night, "is to be a successful serious actress."

No one seemed surprised by the idea, especially the other actress, the two musicians and the producer present. Each declared, in capital letters, that she, too, wanted to be a Star, a Winner, a Big Number.

Then there were the other dreams, less showy perhaps, but still ambitious: the sales clerk who wanted to be a doctor, the teacher who wanted to be a lawyer, the editor who wanted to be a publisher and the three or four secretaries who wanted to be anything but secretaries.

Such dreams delight Barbara Sher, a 41-year-old psychotherapist and past president of a Manhattan human potential growth center called Group Laboratories. As president of Women Success Teams, Miss Sher is leading a series of three-part seminars designed to teach women to work as teams to achieve their individual goals, professional or personal.

With a team on your side, it makes sense to shoot for the big stakes, Miss Sher says, "not just a desk closer to the window or a few more dollars in your pay envelope."

At this point in the presentation, someone inevitably protests, as someone did the other night in the meeting room of a midtown hotel, "But I have no training, no skills . . ."

"Winning is a skill," Miss Sher replied, "one that can be learned. It comes easily to some people who were raised in a winning atmosphere, surrounded by a supportive family, but it does not come easily to most women."

Borrowed Techniques

Women's Success Teams, formed last January, aims to replace that family. By its own admission, the pro-

gram borrows techniques from several disciplines—from est to Zen. It also borrows concepts from the business world, devices such as flow charts, time management systems and accountability systems, which require members to report on daily progress toward goals at weekly team huddles.

But the essential feature of Women's Success Team is a built-in buddy system like the one pioneered 40 years ago by Alcoholics Anonymous and widely used today by other self-help groups, including SmokEnders.

In theory, the buddy system means that one member may call upon another for support, advice or help whenever problems arise. And in practice, it seems to work, judging by talks with women on the eight teams now operating.

Sandy Westin, for example, a public relations executive for a cosmetics company, Mrs. Westin now touts her team—Shazam!—as the greatest thing since mascara, although she admits that a friend had to drag her to that first seminar—"kicking and screaming."

By the next weekend, her telephone was ringing away. One woman wanted help with a radio interview, another was launching a health food restaurant, another needed the name of an effective publicity agent.

"It just felt so good to be able to help somebody and to know that, when I needed help, somebody would be there," Mrs. Westin said. "It was so supportive."

Diane Cathey insists she would still be a secretary, instead of a graduate student, had she not joined the Seven Wonders team last winter.

Cheered on by the Wonders, Miss Cathey managed to save \$1,000, quit her job, and get a partial tuition waiver plus a paid assistantship in the urban affairs program at Hunter College, where she is now enrolled. Eventually, she hopes to get an administrative job in this field.

"I'd been out of school for 12 years," Miss Cathey said. "My grades weren't that good and I was sure I'd never get

in. So, I made up excuses. At one point, I told the others I didn't have time to buy the study book for the graduate record exam. You know what they did? They went out and bought it."

She laughed. "It was such a small thing, but it was such an up," she said. "It gave me the confidence to take the exam and to pass it."

Other women recalled how team members called daily with pointed queries such as: "How's the résumé coming? If it's not typed, I'll be right over to type it." Still others, nervous about an upcoming job interview or a sales presentation were told: "We'll go with you and wait downstairs. We'll have a bloody mary ready for you."

Whether the team ends up toasting a success or drowning its sorrows, the experience is never a total loss, they say.

Among several freelancers to learn this lesson was Basia Poindexter, a painter whose fabric designs are now being used by Giorgio Sant'Angelo and other twinklers in fashion's galaxy.

"What the team showed me," she said, "was that if I just sat on my behind and didn't make those phone calls to those clients, then everything else stood still. But if I just called—even if the answer was no—well, something else will come of it. I now realize how long I was sitting around waiting to be discovered."

Once discovered, Mrs. Poindexter and other successful team members are experiencing a whole new set of problems. Which explains the title of the follow-up workshop held three months after each training seminar: "How Do I Live With Success?"

For those not yet burdened by success, but interested in exploring the possibility—the next training seminar of Women's Success starts Monday in the Mayflower Hotel, 61st Street and Central Park West. There will be another one on Oct. 18. The seminars meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights from 6:30 to about 10. The fee is \$1 , and further information may be obtained by calling 222-4791.