

Using sophisticated laser technology, it was recently discovered that the secret behind the Mona Lisa's smile is that she is thought to have recently given birth. Something to do with a damask-type covering that she was wearing, which was typical for new mothers in her day. For centuries, historians have been trying to crack this particular Da Vinci code to discover what lay behind the enigmatic smile of this supposed "normal" woman. With the hypothesis that a recent birth is behind her look, I have to wonder if in fact she is smiling, or merely grimacing.

Those of us who have given birth and have new babies (I've done it four times myself) might have a hard time imagining that a smile would naturally appear on the lips of someone who has probably been asked to sit for hours on end to pose for a portrait...unless there was a really good donut involved. Not the eating kind, the sitting kind. You know what I'm talking about. Other reasons she might have this forced expression on her face could include:

Great – haven't had a shower in 3 days and my hair is still matted to my head from afterbirth night sweats – we couldn't have scheduled this after my monthly berry-dye highlights?

What's that noise? Oh just a squeaking easel – too bad my body thinks it was a crying baby – I can feel the breast milk running down my seven layers of clothing right now.

I know the uterus shrinks back to its normal size within days of birth – I think I just felt about 16 inches pinch off just now – arrrrgh.

Okay, now I think I can have that post-birth bowel movement. Now.

Nap when the baby naps – sure. He's over there sleeping right now and what am I doing? Posing for some lunatic who keeps mumbling something about a hidden code.

I hope he's going to be finished soon – I have to enrol Junior in the "Rascals of the Renaissance" daycare or he'll never make field supervisor.

Ahhh - just reminiscing about the relatively pain free days of the iron chastity belt...chaffing and all.

Hey this guy's supposed to be a genius – "*Hey buddy how about less time thinking about a rudimentary theory of plate tectonics and more time on effective pain medication?*"

So my husband has to give me a "free portrait" for my birthday? Why didn't he get the hints about the "Resist Your Own Middle Ages" hot oil facial?

I have so many things to do – baby clothes to wash, pigs to slaughter, dirt floors to sweep – I can't believe I'm wasting my time posing for a picture which will probably get thrown on top of the next corpse wagon.

Having a new baby, and children in general, does bring many a smile to many mother's faces, on a regular basis. But no mother is happy sitting still, pretending to smile, in the company of a strange man, while her mental "to do" list grows longer with each passing second.

Compare it to listening to your husband talk about his day at the office after you've spent the past 12 hours changing diapers, wiping faces, cleaning up messes, giving time outs and providing an endless supply of food, patience, love and car rides, and I think you'll be with me on this one.

Kathy Buckworth's latest book *Journey to the Darkside: Supermom Goes Home* is in bookstores everywhere. Visit [www.kathybuckworth.com](http://www.kathybuckworth.com)