COMPLICATED GRIEF: Complicated Grief is a term used for grief that is overwhelming and not progressing toward acceptance.

From Mayo Clinic:
Losing a loved one is one of the most distressing and, unfortunately, common experiences people face. Most people experiencing normal grief and bereavement have a period of sorrow, numbness, and even guilt and anger. Gradually these feelings ease, and it’s possible to accept loss and move forward.

For some people, feelings of loss are debilitating and don’t improve even after time passes. This is known as complicated grief. In complicated grief, painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that you have trouble accepting the loss and resuming your own life.

If you have complicated grief, seek treatment. It can help you come to terms with your loss and reclaim a sense of acceptance and peace. Specifically, you may benefit from professional help if you:

- Can focus on little else but your loved one’s death
- Have persistent pining or longing for the deceased person
- Have thoughts of guilt or self-blame
- Believe that you did something wrong or could have prevented the death
- Feel as if life isn’t worth living
- Have lost your sense of purpose in life
- Wish you had died along with your loved one

SECONDARY GRIEF: The initial loss is often referred to as the Primary Loss, and the losses that follow are identified as Secondary Losses. Secondary losses are consequences of the Primary Loss. It is not that secondary losses are any less important, intense or difficult, it is just that they emerge out of the primary loss.

An example of secondary grief is when a parent loses a child. They will not only grieve the loss of the child but also the loss of a future son or daughter in-law and future grand children. If the loss was an adult child they may be estranged from the spouse and be grieving the loss of being with their grandchildren.

From Compassionate Friends (a organization for those who have lost children):
http://www.compassionatefriends.org/home.aspx

The following are just some of the many different losses a person may experience after the death of a loved one:

1. **Loss of SELF**: The part of our SELF that was given to another in love has been wrenched from our being at the time of death ~ we feel like ‘half a person’ or maybe a non-existent person. ~ we lose ourselves, too
2. **Loss of identity**: As individuals, we identify SELF by the ‘role or position’ held in a relationship. When the other person is no longer present and the role no longer held, we often lose the feeling of wholeness. We may lose our identity as a parent or a sibling. We no longer have that child or that sibling, and it changes who we are.
3. **Loss of self confidence**: Because as grieving persons we no longer recognize our personal wholeness, the feeling of inadequacy, uselessness, unworthiness is often strong. It is not unusual for strong confident people to suddenly feel weak, incapable and insecure. Confusion settles in because we don’t understand this change. Just acknowledge that it does exist and does very often happen.
4. **Loss of life style**: **Loss of Income – Financial Stress**. Death forces a person to begin a new way of life. The family dynamic changes. Income can change. Relationships change. Sometimes it means relocating from where you lived. Quite often, as all of the other losses
17. Loss of inner joy

16. Loss of health

15. Loss of ability to make decisions

14. Loss of the ability to see choices

13. Loss of ability to focus

12. Loss of dreams

11. Loss of direction

10. Loss of the future

9. Loss of the past

8. Loss of known family structure

7. Loss of the familiar

6. Loss of feeling ‘safe’

5. Loss of security

4. Loss of joy

3. Loss of happiness

2. Loss of our relationship with others or with the spiritually we may have once felt seem gone.

1. Loss of health.

Grieving people may wonder about self-sufficiency. Can financial resources meet the needs? OR... our relationship with our child or our sibling provided a sense of “the world is safe”. Perhaps we felt protective of our loved one and that, somehow, we feel as if didn’t complete the job; we didn’t protect them enough. How can we feel secure or even protective of ourselves or those remaining close to us? We suddenly feel fear and confused about how to deal with these intense feelings.

8. Loss of the familiar: This Changed Life is unfamiliar... The inside of your house may need to become different – it feels different without the presence of your child or sibling. The physical space may need to be restructured or changed. Your routine is different... your whole spirit feels different. This sense of unfamiliarity with ones own life can frequently cause family and friends to have difficulty relating to the person who has suffered the trauma.

9. Loss of the past: As new relationships/friendships are experienced we grieve that NEW friends, although supportive and accepting, cannot have a bond with our past journey and history... They simply were not there. We cannot ‘rewind’ and re-experience except in memory. We can’t turn to our loved one anymore to talk about shared memories. It creates a feeling of aloneness and sorrow.

10. Loss of the future: It is frightening for a person who has suffered a loss to think ahead; to think of next year or next month or even next week. There is a fear that whatever future there is will be as painful as the present moment... or, also very scary, may be more fulfilling, thus ‘dishonoring’ to the person who died. The ‘picture’ of the future changes when a loved one dies. Some people get ‘stuck’ in the present which does not allow the possibility of a future. Sometimes we are so invested in just surviving this moment that FUTURE seems impossible.

11. Loss of direction: In Grief, we may not feel as if we have a purpose in life any more; nothing seems to matter. We are suddenly catapulted to the ‘new reality’ that we never wanted, never asked for, don’t want to accept. Loss can create fears about this new ‘direction’ in life.

12. Loss of dreams: All plans for ‘spending the rest of my life with the person I love’ disappears in death; plans to see your lost child or sibling marry and have a family are dashed; the death of a child robs a parent of the possibility of grandchildren or being a part of ‘rites of passage’ in that child’s life; retirement plans become meaningless.

13. Loss of ability to focus: The mind seems desensitized to anything but the crisis. All other aspects of life seem insignificant. Decisions take concentration and our minds find it hard to focus enough to make worthwhile and lasting decisions. Even simple things like choosing dinner, what clothes to wear, how to get to a place that you have been to a hundred times before can become a major chore or seeming impossibility.

14. Loss of the ability to see choices: Since our life at this moment was not a conscious choice, there is a subconscious feeling that we have no control over any aspect of our life, creating a sense of futility.

15. Loss of ability to make decisions: Because of the existing insecurity and lack of self-trust, we may find ourselves wondering “What should I do?” about almost anything. When we ask others we can become more confused because everyone gives a different answer. Indecision and confusion are common in grief.

16. Loss of health: The strain of the emotional and psychological work often causes physical problems such as nausea, migraine headaches, muscle knots, back problems, anxiety and panic, and even more serious health problems. Our chemical balance changes. This is physiological and not imaginary. We know that it is important to eat and keep hydrated and exercise but we don’t see the ‘reason’ for it, or just don’t feel like it. Energy is sapped. It is hard to take care of ourselves. We sometimes feel that we are experiencing symptoms of the disease of which our loved one died.

17. Loss of inner joy: When we are in pain; when we are grieving, JOY is a non-existent word that it too often hard to relate to. It is NORMAL. It can take a very long time before we can even think of happiness, let alone joy, again. Things that once gave us pleasure, even our relationship with others or with the spiritually we may have once felt seem gone.
18. **Loss of patience with self**: Sometimes this is brought on by what we feel other’s expectations of us are. Sometimes we feel that we should be dealing better with our loss. Sometimes we think that we should be further along in our grief work. Sometimes we feel inadequate when the feelings of grief / sadness / remorse / unforgiveness last for an extended time. "I’ve always been strong." "I should be over this by now." "I can’t seem to stop crying." "I used to be the Strong one"—we hurt ourselves with this lack of patience. We aren’t the same as we were. There is no real agenda, yet we sometimes impatiently try to force ourselves into one.

19. **Loss of motivation**: So much needs to be accomplished, but confusion makes us very skeptical of doing anything or making any decisions, thus, we often fall into depression after a loss as GRIEF begins to 'pile up'. Our energy is sapped. We may not care about things that were once important.

20. **Loss of feeling close to God or Spirituality**: Many grievers struggle with spiritual questions after a loss and feel it is disrespectful to ask the “why?” questions of the Higher Power. Some find ourselves directing our anger toward God and thus seeming to 'sever' a once close relationship. Belief systems can suddenly be turned inside out and upside down. This ‘spiritual crisis’ can often lead to feelings of confusion, doubt guilt and depression.

21. **Loss of Objects – Things Seem To Disappear Frequently.** Not so funny, as a result of the confusion, lack of focusing and concentration, the fogginess, all of the physical and emotional effects and affects of The Grief, things seems to suddenly disappear. It feels almost as if the world not only swallowed up our loved one, and our self, but things that belong to us, as well. It may almost feel like a conspiracy of The Universe against us.

22. **The address book change** It is sad and frustrating, but very true that our address book changes. Some people feel as if our loss is contagious. Or maybe they feel that we aren’t progressing fast enough or that we are maudlin and not upbeat enough. We often feel abandoned by those we felt should have been there to count on, creating a new grief of the loss of those relationships.

**REMEMBER THAT WE ARE DEFINED AS NEWLY BEREAVED FOR AT LEAST THE FIRST FULL FIVE YEARS. THERE IS TRULY AN INFANCY TO GRIEF AND THE GROWING STAGES THROUGH IT. BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF. DON'T TRY TO FIT INTO A TIMETABLE OR IMAGINARY SELF OR SOCIETALLY imposed “STAGES”. YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THE MOST HORRIBLE PAIN OF YOUR LIFE. HURTING IS VERY REAL.**

**COMPOUNDED GRIEF:**

Compound grief is not a term used in the medical field. In this context, Compounded Grief is referring to multiple losses at one time.

We have a reduce capacity to cope when we are grieving. Just the normal stresses from life can become difficult. Since your energy is consumed on the primary loss, everything else seems overwhelming. It is common to react worse to the added stressors than to the actual loss itself. As a result, our friends and family can catch the blunt of this. If everyone involved does not understand that the frustration is coming from the primary grief, it can cause a breakdown in relationships. So talk openly about what is the real cause of not coping.

Similarly, if another major event happens like the illness, loss of a job or having to relocate, life can become overwhelming. When possible, avoid major changes in your life until you have progressed through your grief. Know that these added stressors are difficult and that your difficulty to cope is being driven by the primary grief.

All of these added events can make grieving more difficult. However, when a second loss happens before acceptance is reached with the first loss you have compounded grief. For my wife and I we had our adult daughter die unexpectedly 4.5 months after our adult son died unexpectedly. Going through the grief process for two separate losses was intense. In addition, my wife suffers from several debilitating illnesses. The compounding of everything intensifies the grieving process. We found ourselves not grieving for both children at the same moment. Both of us experienced our grief shifting back and forth between the two children. This maybe God's way of making it possible to cope.